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How Women Remember:

Media and the Experience of the Past

by

Emily Keightley

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

March 2007

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of the relationship of women of different ages to the past from a theoretical and empirical perspective. It aims to deal with existing conceptions of time and temporality in late modernity in order to address the temporal relationships that human subjects are able to articulate between past and present. Women's experience forms the central focus of the study as a response to the general neglect of women as subjects in cultural studies, and more specifically in the emerging field of memory studies. The concern with memory emerges from the identification of a contemporary temporal paradox. In everyday culture, memory and its textual forms has enjoyed a resurgence with critics hailing the emergence of a memory boom. At the same time, academic historians and cultural critics are suggesting that we have never been more divorced from our own past as we are in contemporary society. In light of this, the thesis addresses the nature and scope of everyday remembering in two complementary ways and is structured accordingly. Firstly, in chapters one to five, these seemingly divergent trends are theoretically investigated and, in some ways at least, resolved, by assessing and reconceiving contemporary conceptualisations of memory, such as nostalgia and the separation of memory and imagination. This also involves an evaluation of the historical limitations imposed and possibilities provided by photography and phonography as ubiquitous forms of mediated representation commonly involved in mnemonic activity. Secondly, in chapters six to ten, the ways in which women remember and experience the past in their everyday lives is addressed from an empirical perspective. Depth interviews were conducted with nineteen women of different generations and ethnic backgrounds on the subject of memory and everyday encounters with the past. The analysed transcripts are used to gain insights into how women relate to the past in their everyday lives, the role that this has in constructing contemporary identities, and the minutiae of the ways in which cultural, social and personal memory intersect in the enactment of mnemonic activity in everyday life.

Chapter 1
Introduction

> Memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred.
>
> Walter Benjamin (1986) p.25

Time is indivisible from our everyday life. We live in it and through it; communicate and share it; organise and construct it. It informs the very fabric of our experience. One of the primary modes we have of engaging with a sense of time in our everyday lives is remembering. It is a process that brings the past, present and future into view of one-another and makes sense of their interrelationships. Memory is a faculty that continues to elude us as much as it enchants us. Some forms of recalling the past can be so routine as to be almost imperceptible, whilst some acts of remembering are so painful that they can disrupt our very sense of self and the world around us. The tantalising proximity to the past that remembering promises is always tempered by its constant reminders of loss and temporal distance. This study takes these two contradictions and the ways in which they are lived, as its initial provocation: the double bind of the mundane and the exceptional and the paradox of presence and absence.

From the earliest investigations of memory, a concern with accuracy and veracity of recall has inhibited an analysis of the multiple 'truths' that we forge in the processes of remembering and of the purposes that they serve in relation to the social world and our individual selves. The debate over false memory (e.g. Loftus, 1996) for example, perpetuates the dichotomy of true and false memories, fixed in binary relations to one another. The passing of time ensures the past is irretrievable in its original form. All that can be known of the past are shadows of its existence as they are reformulated and reinterpreted in the present. This study acknowledges and then sets aside a positivist notion of mnemonic facts, or the possibility of pure recall, and sets about illuminating memory as the theatre of the past where temporal knowledge is constantly rehearsed, dramatized, reviewed and revised. This requires attention to be paid to the role of multiple tenses in remembering. Memory in everyday life is concerned as much with the present and future as it is with what has been.

Remembering exists in a plurality of forms and the study of memory and lived relationships with time have undeniably multiplied and diversified since Maurice Halbwach's (1992) study of collective memory, accounting for individual, social and cultural modes of interaction with the past. Studies of social memory and how the past operates for groups and

societies in the present has been widely examined, as for example in the detailed work of Luisa Passerini (1987), emphasising the collective and communal nature of reconstructing and reconstructing narratives of the past and the vital role that these play in the successful functioning of social groups. Cultural memory is also a major area of exploration. Annette Kuhn's (2002a) work on the role of cinema in cultural memory and Paul Grainge's (2002) work on monochrome are only two examples of many which attend to the ways in which accounts of the past circulate in textual forms and mediate our sense of time and memory. Individual memory also retains its popularity as an area of academic study in the realms of philosophy and psychology, focussing on the role of memory in constructing a sense of self and how memory enables us to act as coherent agents in the world.

But the diversification of the study of memory and remembering has in part led to its fragmentation, often leaving cultural memory unmoored from the individual experience of it and personal memory divorced from the social contexts of its construction and enactment. In everyday life, the individual, social and cultural dimensions of memory interweave and overlap, and unless under close scrutiny, often appear indivisible. Cultural narratives on offer to us cannot be separated from the temporal sense we make of our personal experience. Public and private remembering act on one another in a reciprocal relationship and are therefore entwined in the process of constructing temporal meaning. In the manner of memory itself, the study of it must maintain the integrity of the mnemonic event, accommodating and accounting for the diversity of levels on which each memory operates. We can have no adequate knowledge of the ways in which we orientate ourselves to the past and future without bringing these varying forms of memory into view of one-another and actively investigating the ways in which they illuminate one another. This is one of the primary aims of this study: to conceptualise memory in a way that bears a close resemblance to the lived mnemonic practices that we engage in day after day.

This plurality of memory is inextricable from the diversity of those individuals engaged in the action of remembering. Our selves and therefore our capacity to act in and on the physical and imagined world around us, is structured and limited by an array of social variables: gender, ethnicity, age and class, among others. Remembering is not exempt from this. From our practical access to mnemonic resources to the nature of the imaginative space we are afforded to contemplate the past, we are constrained by structures and relations of power. Remembering and temporal consciousness is something different for each of us, depending on how we are uniquely positioned in relation to the defining conditions of social life. But simultaneously, we respond to these pressures differently and make sense of them in different ways. Our individual agency and creativity means that as temporal beings, we

always exceed the sum of our social constituents. It is in this sense that gender is positioned throughout this study as a site of commonality and difference. Multiple versions of gender are identified. These are constantly interpolated and reconstructed by other points of social identification such as ethnic background, age and social class, and constantly conditioned by their specific relationships to time and the past.

The thesis contributes to an increasing body of work that centralises the voices and experiences of women. Women's everyday lives and experience have remained an under-theorised area in mainstream cultural studies, media studies and sociology. Outstanding works such as Ien Ang's (1985) reception study of women's relationship to the soap opera *Dallas*, and Joke Hermes's (1995) study of the experience of reading women's magazines, are the exceptions that prove the rule. This neglect is exaggerated further when memory is thrown into the mix. Personal accounts of gendered remembering have emerged, such as the photographic work of Jo Spence (1986) and Annette Kuhn's (2002b) analysis of her own childhood, yet very little work has appeared which documents the remembering of everyday women, particularly those engagements with time and memory experienced by minority ethnic groups or women of different ages. Kathleen Woodward (1999) notes the relative invisibility of older women from feminist work more generally whilst Heidi Safia Mirza (1997) complains that black women's experience is never addressed in its own right. It is examined on the basis of *either* the racial subject *or* the gendered subject (p.4), rather than dealing with women of colour's multiple social positioning as unified subjects. In order to address the fractured way that gendered experience has been dealt with, a focus on women's memory, whilst acknowledging the plurality of gendered experiences that this encompasses, is a necessary, indeed vital move.

Remaining faithful to the lived experience of remembering has made it vital to assess the practical ways in which we can invoke and interact with the past. Technologies of media and communication are central to the late modern social and cultural landscape and are intimately concerned with the structuring of time and the experience of it in our everyday lives. William James (1950: 622) suggests that "the conception (of time) is absolutely symbolic". We cannot therefore perceive time without representing it to ourselves. The most ubiquitous of these forms of temporal representation are photography and phonography. Few of us can claim not to possess some form of photograph collection and many of us can immediately identify with the sensation of pastness evoked by a familiar record. As forms of mechanical reproduction, these technologies have often been considered independently. In relation to memory, Barthes *Camera Lucida* is perhaps the most famous epistemological analysis of photography whilst Tia De Nora has made links between phonography and

memory, although phonography as a form of mechanical reproduction (rather than music as a communicative form) is generally afforded less explicit critical attention. Yet these media are not cut off from one another in our everyday experiences of time and memory. The aim here is to evaluate the interrelating roles of photography and phonography in generating temporal meaning, maintaining a focus on the similar and divergent ways in which they act as vehicles for the establishment of dialogue between past and present, and as resources in the construction of temporal identities.

With these themes in mind, this study seeks the rapprochement of two central fragmentations that have occurred in the examination of time and memory: the theoretical and the empirical; the private and the public. The relationship between the theoretical and the empirical aims to satisfy the twin needs of developing adequate conceptual tools for the excavation of late modern temporality whilst foregrounding the importance of everyday life as the arena where these tools can be employed as illuminating and explanatory devices. Bringing together public and private dimensions of remembering is part of a broader concern that cultural and social memory cannot be abstracted from those individuals who undertake them. The dynamics of communication between these dimensions must continually be borne in mind if a coherent and holistic account of the ways in which we remember is to be achieved.

The structural organisation of the thesis reflects these aims as the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the study are separated in the interests of clarity, but are constantly referred to, and remain in view of one-another. The first half of the thesis theorises the temporal landscape of late modernity by assessing the value of the current critical analyses of time, temporality and memory and reformulating them. This section achieves two things: firstly it aligns the theoretical to the lived experience of the past-in-the-present by paying close attention to the temporal possibilities of late modernity, and the practical and imaginative tools we have in enacting them. Secondly these theoretical considerations keep the movements between personal and public memory in view of one another, so dealing with remembering as we encounter it, rather than as an academic abstraction.

Chapter two on media of memory brings together the temporal particularities and potentialities of photography and phonography as two central forms of preservation and representation in the relationship between past, present and future. The intimate relationship that these technologies have with the past is frequently taken for granted in considerations of time and memory without a careful assessment of the forms of temporal engagement they permit. The chapter charts how they both appear to allow an unregulated access to the past

and simultaneously attenuate it. Extricating photography and phonography from their habitual uses and ritualised performance and scrutinising their forms and contexts, facilitates conceptualisation of these two technologies as sites of temporal engagement and disaffection.

By examining these two technologies of memory comparatively rather than in isolation, the artificial separation of visual and auditory culture is refused. Both their differences and complementarities as modes of engaging with the past are assessed. As forms of mechanical reproduction with dazzling fidelity to a past referent, both photography and phonography seem to arrest time and act in place of memory, yet their endurance through time does not leave them entirely unchanged. Their potential to stimulate a dialogic relationship between past and present is dependent on the contexts in which they are used, and their value can easily shift away from personal potency into a generalised quality of pastness.

Considering photography and phonography as part of a repository of cultural tools that we have for articulating and making sense of time past, accounts for the ways in which we are able to perform mnemonic action. It also aids an exposition of the relationship between personal remembering and social and cultural time and memory. Photography and phonography are considered not only as devices for personal remembering, but as moving between the private and public domains. In so doing, the texts of memory act as sites for the mediation between personal and public pasts. Of particular importance are Barthes's *studium* and *punctum* as ways of conceiving the access to the past which both photography and phonography permit in paradoxical tension with one another. While the personalised *punctum* seems to sharply affirm historical specificity, engagement and creativity, the banal *studium* characterises the dissolution of temporal distance and the denial of contingency that stylised and infinitely reproduced texts of the past foster in their public deployments.

In the discussion of technologies of memory, indiscriminate valuations (positive or negative) of photography and phonography's potential as traditional historical sources are challenged. Rather than their ability to attest to a past truth, they are evaluated on their ability to sustain a transactional relationship between the past and present. The distinction between memory and history is loosened, allowing the movements between personal, social and cultural memory and history to be examined, tracing both the generation and annulment of historical meaning in the everyday social and cultural uses of photography and phonography.

Chapter three investigates nostalgia as a mode of interaction with the past which has emerged from the conditions and theorisation of modernity's temporal dichotomies. As a concept, traditional notions of nostalgia have encapsulated late modern problems in reconciling past and present and recognising the imaginative value of time past. Nostalgia has

been seen as a defeatist retreat from the present, and evidence of loss of faith in the future. Whilst this is most certainly a response to the experience of loss endemic in modernity and late modernity, it cannot be characterised as the only mode of responding to loss and lack. In this chapter nostalgia is reconceived as having numerous manifestations which cannot be reduced to a singular or absolute definition. Just as the experiences of loss in modernity are multiple, so are the ranges of responses to it.

The meaning and significance of nostalgia is therefore multiple, and so should be seen as accommodating progressive, even utopian impulses as well as regressive stances and melancholic attitudes. Nostalgia as a turn to the past in response to loss has the potential to provide bearings for the future and creative rejoinders to the present, potentially encompassing both disenchantment with the present but also the desire for re-enchantment. Its contrarieties are evident in both vernacular and media forms of remembering and historical reconstruction. Where some are replete with possibilities to use the past as a resource for change in the present, others are characterised by an imaginative poverty which provides only resources to mourn what is past.

Nostalgia is not only conceived as a temporal action, it is considered as a conceptual tool. Its crossover from vernacular description to academic concept has left nostalgia lacking in clarity and efficacy, which this chapter seeks to address. For too long nostalgia has been set pejoratively against the legitimate historiographical investigation of the past and considered a vernacular aping of professional History. Here nostalgia is re-examined as an engagement with the past that provides different, but no less valid knowledge and insights about the past in comparison with History. Rather than fostering divisions between history and vernacular memory, this consideration of nostalgia seeks their rapprochement.

By reconceiving nostalgia both as a form of popular memory and a critical concept, it is possible to reach a sensitive account of the limitations of thinking about the past and the potential for renewal and revision that it provides in the present. The stringent criteria of historical validity are again deferred to an assessment of potential for temporal engagement and transformation in the present and nostalgia as a critical tool is considered as a multi-faceted and sensitive construct able to account for both progressive and conservative representations of the past, rather than a dystopian temporal catch-all.

The fourth chapter on the mnemonic imagination draws attention to the very personal and intimate ways in which we make sense of the past and bring it into individual consciousness. The chapter directly addresses the contingency and constructedness of individual remembering in order to both move on from naïve accounts of remembering as

straightforward recall of the past and to escape the explanatory confines of rigidly counter posed temporal tenses. Mnemonic imagination is developed as a concept which can accommodate the multiple temporal orientation of remembering, both to the past and to the present and future, which has been obscured by the positioning of memory and imagination in a dichotomous relationship.

Where imagination and memory have been positioned in opposition, their mutual complementarities have been overlooked and the ways that they operate to mediate past, present and future, not separately, but in conjunction, have been missed. Imagination is considered as a motor for memory: the means by which we bring the past to life in the process of remembering. It is also the means by which we are able to utilise memories as resources for the past and present. Imagination is active is fostering new and reconstructing existing relationships between the past and present, allowing our continuous narratives of self and development to make sense as time moves on. It is in the combination of imagination and memory that we can ask the questions 'what if?', guage the consequences of making different life choices and consider how different a life might be if lived in a different time. It is imagination that allows memory to respond to changed presents and sustains its contingent relationship with the present and future.

Mnemonic imagination is also a concept which aids the examination of public constructions of time. For example, documentary film relies on both memory and imagination in both its construction and consumption. It is imagination that activates the past as a creative resource in the creation of temporal meaning for both author and viewer. It allows remembering to be empathetic, enabling us to imagine the experience of others by imaginatively adopting and repositioning ourselves in relationship to pasts other than our own.

The chapter does not insist that all acts of memory involve imagination, nor that all acts of imagination involve memory, rather that when they are enacted mutually, they permit remembering to involve the present and future as well as the past. It is also made clear that the conjunction of memory and imagination is no guarantee of a progressive or transactional relationship between past and present as imagination can be utilised in the interests of intensely regressive aims. Rather it is the quality of imagination that is brought to bear on memory and the interests which it serves which provides us with a framework for evaluation.

Chapter five deals explicitly with movements between public and private memory and considers how they have been implicated in the preceding chapters. Public and private memories are conceived as fundamentally interconnected as twinned parts of the holistic process of making temporal meaning in everyday life. Foregrounded throughout the chapter are the mundane and vernacular modes of interaction between private and public time, and the sites at which this occurs in order to generate a coherent account of memory as it is lived.

The motivations for remembering are traced, followed by an assessment of how remembering is implicated in the construction of the self, highlighting the flexible, contingent and re-constructive nature of memory in the process of generating a durable sense of identity. The borderlands between personal and public memory are then identified and followed with a broader focus on the process of generating and articulating collective memory. Interpersonal communication is considered alongside other forms of representing the past as simultaneously being formed by and forming, personal remembering.

Central to this examination of memory as it is lived is the move towards an assessment of the lived contexts of memory in preparation for their empirical analysis in the second part of the thesis. Social categories such as gender, ethnicity and age are considered in their role in shaping our remembering and also the role remembering has in shaping our experience of these categories to which we belong. This ranges from the limitations that domestic labour places on time and space to remember to specific utilisations of memory in contexts of migrant experience.

As an examination of the lived experiences of the past and the resources this offers for the construction of identity, this chapter reflects on issues of power and agency in late modernity, addressing the barriers to, and potential for, progressive and productive temporal and historical consciousness that exists under these conditions. The constant communication between personally remembered experience and collective public representation of the past is central for the possibility for change and renewal in the present to be ensured.

The second half of the thesis is based on the empirical study of nineteen women of different ages and ethnic backgrounds. The empirical work examines the relation of the theoretical positions outlined in the previous chapters to women's experiences of time and memory, and attempts to make sense of the ways that these experiences might be performed in everyday life. Depth interviews were used to elicit accounts of the women's experiences of remembering which could then be used to pin down concepts which up until now have been floating free from their contexts of enactment.

In chapter six, the theoretical underpinnings of the fieldwork are worked through, particularly establishing the importance of lived experience as a site of investigation for cultural and media studies. This is particularly pertinent in investigations of memory where a small number of very rich studies have led the way by using everyday accounts of experience as the basis for examination of particular periods of time (see for example Passerini, 1987).

The chapter moves on to a practical assessment of the methodological approaches employed in the thesis. The use of the depth interview method is explained and justified from both politically and epistemological perspectives. It is at this point that gender is discussed in its relation to memory and essentialised identities, gendered or otherwise, are actively rejected in favour of constructivist accounts. The practical conduct of the interviews is detailed followed by an account of the analytical process. The chapter highlights the importance of examining both the manifest content of the interviews as well as their discursive construction. As Annette Kuhn suggests in her study of 1930s cinema going, the data should be read in two ways: to shed light on the activity itself (in this case remembering) and for the light the data sheds on the workings of memory in the process of narrating it. The chapter finishes with a short profile of each of the research participants in order to introduce the participants in terms of background and social position.

Chapters seven, eight and nine are centred on the analysis of conversations with these women about the role of remembering in their everyday lives. They are organised around the themes which emerged from these conversations, resulting in the analysis building up a holistic picture of the way memory is experienced in everyday life. The conceptual tools set out in the first half of the thesis are used to help make sense of the experiences of remembering and to assess the level and modes of temporal engagement the women articulated. However it is important to note that this is not a one-way imposition of a set of conceptual criteria onto the women's narrative. The women's experience also feeds back into those heuristic devices in order to contextualise, develop and challenge them and to make sense of the ways that that they may, or may not, work in practice.

Chapter seven is primarily concerned with the relationship between gender and remembering. Gender is implicated widely in the ways that women relate to the past. At the most simple level this involves the remembering of gendered experience: education, a romantic relationship, or domestic life. The chapter details particular incidences of this, particularly identifying commonalities between the women on the basis of the experiences that were remembered and how these were inflected by ethnicity, age and class.

The chapter quickly moves beyond simple accounts of remembering of gendered experience. The construction of a sense of a 'women's history' was key in many of the narratives and provided both an overarching gendered historical framework through which past experience could be understood, and a shared subjectivity (even if only loosely so) as a ground for gendered communication and action in the present. The chapter highlights the importance of consumption as a gendered activity in shaping both what is remembered and how, ranging from constructions of the 1960s as a decade of choice, to remembering the exclusions of poverty and the alternative memories that it fostered. The chapter considers the importance of the domestic space for the participants in their experience of remembering, both in terms of how it informed remembering and how it was structured by the practices of remembering.

The chapter finishes with an account of the importance of remembering in women's social lives and experience. In some cases it was a mode of reconciling expectations and experience in order to make sense of one's social position. For others the practices of remembering were insufficient and, in some cases, problematic in themselves, and served to raise rather than resolve tensions between the past and present. The relationships that were laid out in chapter five were utilised as an explanatory framework in addressing these practices. Ultimately, gendered remembering is characterised by both commonality and difference and that remembering is an action which reconciles past and present experiences of gender and that, in their contingency, multiple accounts of gender are produced.

Chapter eight attends to the specific acts that are involved in remembering and the resources that are utilised in their performance. This involves a consideration of the importance of photography and phonography in the women's experiences of remembering. The role of the technologies is addressed in practical, imaginative and discursive terms. The consideration of the potentialities of photography and phonography for historical engagement laid out in chapter two is explored by a careful examination of the women's uses and encounters with technologies of memory.

Photography in its textual forms emerges throughout the chapter as a structuring tool in the organisation of memory, from the systematic construction of the family album to alternative modes of display. The practices of photography were discussed in terms of their social value in policing the boundaries of groups and relationships, and attributing value to particular individuals and practices. Of particular importance was the family album in constructing feminine identities, such as mother or daughter, and in constructing a more

longitudinal sense of familial identity. Phonography was found to provide alternative possibilities for the participants, particularly in terms of the congruence it allowed between identities past and present in the act of remembering. The phonographic remembering experience was characterised both by its intensity and its sensory affect, despite the more ambiguous relationship between the record and a particular point in the past. It can be used both deliberately for affect, or intrude upon consciousness in unbidden ways.

Interestingly, photography and phonography were treated with ambivalence in some cases and their limitations in articulating and performing memory were made explicit. This was often concerned with the different ways in which they recorded time: phonography records the passage of time such as the duration of a song, a suite or a concerto, and photography captures an instant in time, wrenched from its temporal sequence. The inability of photography to capture experience in its totality was referred to as precluding the seamless integration and use of photography in everyday life. Photographic texts as a necessarily objectified mode of representation also posed problems in the temporal meanings they provide. Aspects of the memory that phonography facilitates were also identified as limited particularly in terms of their intensely personal nature, which in some instances prevented communication. The remembering experience was one of isolation as well as intense connection.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of the discourses of memory as they were constructed through talk in the interviews and in everyday practices. The process of constructing one's memories and talking about them allowed women to construct both enduring and provisional temporal identities. The use of parent languages was particularly important in the articulation of memory for ethnic minority women and the recurrent use of photography and phonography as rhetorical devices in the construction of memory narratives was of particular interest. The use of language to position oneself in relation to the past is frequently linked to gender as a specific mode of remembering. Women's everyday uses and performances of language are concerned with generating a temporal sense of self, enacting social relationships and orientating the participants to a wider sense of cultural past.

Chapter nine, like chapter four, deals with the negotiation of public and private memory. In doing so, it draws particularly on the concepts of mnemonic imagination and nostalgia to illuminate the ways in which these two spheres of mnemonic operation are moved between. The chapter pays particular attention to the specific ways in which women make sense of themselves as temporal agents, and the world around them, in the mutual movements between public and private forms of remembering. The relationship between the personal and

public and private is revealed as constantly in flux, moving between tension and reconciliation, and always engaged in the process of generating new temporal meaning.

The relationship between the interiority of private memory and the outwardness of public and collective memory is articulated in particularly gendered ways. Domesticity and familial positions shape and structure the way that women reconcile their private and public temporalised selves. Building narrative continuity and negotiating change and fragmentation in the liminal space between the private and public is of key importance in this chapter. The unique social position each participant occupies shapes their narratives and the contingency of their position over time is marked in the shifting reconstructions of the self as private and public agents. Through the course of the chapter public time emerges as essentially plural, incorporating multiple spaces and shifting conditions of access and participation.

Cultural resources are considered in terms of what they provide for engagement with time and memory. This ranges from mediated representations of the past and from the past, to religious ritual, to public historical narratives. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the blurred temporal boundaries involved in the participants' remembering. Mnemonic imagination and nostalgia are drawn on to highlight the role of memory, not as a source of knowledge about the past, but as a mode of temporal engagement which has the potential to foster relationships between the past, present and future in creative ways. The participants' memories are not only concerned with tangible experience but are also experimental and infused with imagination resulting in both conservative and transformative action.

In concluding the thesis, I move outwards to gain a broader view of the role of memory in everyday life by considering the shifting perceptions of time that characterised the women's narratives. Not only were the activities of remembering subsumed within these temporal orientations, guiding and marshalling their movements, but the shifts and patterns in the women's constructions of time were also emblematic of the multiplicity and contingency of gendered remembering. These constructions emphasise one of the key findings of this study: that women are intimately engaged in oscillations between memory and history. Far from being marooned on the island of the present, or hopelessly lost, searching for a fantasy of an ideal past, women's remembering is a sensitive and complex negotiation of the past in an ever-changing present.

Younger women and those slightly older women with no children constructed their narratives using a model of linear time. Senses of self were developmental and were concerned with the establishment and maintenance of a coherent longitudinal narrative where the future is constructed as an arena of self-actualisation. Women in domestic situations with

children largely utilised notions of cyclical time, characterised by shifting familial roles and a sense that the cycle would continue in the process of reproducing nuclear families. This was not always adopted wholesale; several women highlighted the difficulty familial fragmentation created for using this temporal structure and that alternative sense of time has to be used to bolster the partiality of a cyclical time. Older participants, moving away from a central location in the nuclear family, tended to draw on broader historical constructions of time. Aware of their own mortality, they made moves not only to consider their own memories, but readied themselves to *become* memories. Contrary to the assertions of many postmodern critics, historicity is constantly being articulated, mediated and struggled over, in the tension between public and private memory and in the liminal space between the accessible past and temporal loss.

In the final chapter the thesis is considered in a holistic sense in terms of what it has achieved in empirical and epistemological terms. The thesis is located in relation to the emerging field of memory studies and speculation is offered about the future direction of the field. Problems and limitations of the study are identified and considered and possible remedies are discussed. This leads on to set a course for future work.

Chapter 2

Technologies of Memory

Introduction

Various modern cultural technologies, in their general range, act to stimulate and facilitate the process of remembering. In this chapter the focus is on two such technologies, phonography and photography, with the aim of examining how and why they act as media of memory. The motivation for considering these particular technologies is three-fold. Firstly, photography and phonography are among the oldest of the 'new' media. As forms of mechanically reproducible representation, they became ubiquitous throughout the twentieth century and their popularity as everyday forms of preserving memories has endured, despite the changes that digitisation and other developments have brought. This duration makes them particularly suited to the aims of this project. It is quite feasible for a woman of twenty to have a photograph collection spanning, and perhaps exceeding her own lifetime, as it is for a grandmother. Similarly, both are likely to have collections of recorded music, whether on record, cassette or compact disc which, given the extent of reissues in new formats, may derive from any period in the history of recorded music. The historical span of these technologies has made it possible to talk comparatively to women of different ages about their mnemonic activities and to gain a sense of how these activities have developed and changed over the course of a lifetime. The second motivation is that photography and phonography exemplify contrasting ways of recording time and experience. The differences between sound and vision are encoded in their textual forms, resulting in radically different sensory appeals being made to the past, by and through them. Thirdly, the ways in which photography and phonography preserve the past are structurally different. A photograph represents an instant in time, literally a snapshot. Phonography preserves time, or rather a segment of time in its sequential flow, allowing duration to be captured and represented. This inevitably affects the mnemonic possibilities these technologies provide, and by attending to them, insight can be gained into the ways that different modes of preserving or evoking experience can texture our everyday remembering.

Photographic images and popular songs are commonly used as ways of representing or evoking the past. They occur routinely in various media, at times singly, at others in conjunction with each other, as complementary semiotic forms, and their presence is commonplace, as for example in personal music collections and family photo albums, where

they mark past events and periods in people's lives, and help replay them in their memories. They may do this in different ways, but their roles in remembering are not necessarily at odds because of these differences.

Assessments of remembering and engagements with historical time are usually divided into positive and negative ways of valuing mechanically and electronically reproduced images and sounds from the past. Attention must be paid to these varying temporal possibilities of photography and phonography, but not in order to affirm and perpetuate the division between them. Instead, they need to be understood in continual relation to each other. Not only do they mutually rely on each other for their definition, but response to past images and sounds is also not confined solely either to one or the other, in any absolute or fixed set of alternatives. Our everyday engagement with these key signifiers of what has gone before is at times undecided and ambivalent and at others, more certain and unswerving. The point of thinking about shifting responses to them in this manner is to explore the possibility of reconciliation between their polarized hermeneutics.

There are obvious differences between photographic images and popular music, the most basic being their appeal to distinct human senses. These differences certainly exist, but they shouldn't be polarised. They can be understood instead as illuminating each other, particularly in the complementary ways in which they mediate the past, as they do in Patsy Cline's potent 1960s song 'She's Got You', where photographs and records are bracketed together as points of emotional connection to an absent lover. While visual and auditory cultures are experienced on their own, as bearers of personal and social memory, they are also experienced in conjunction with each other, or considered as parallel forms of perceptual engagement, as are our own eyes and ears. Considering technologically mediated images and musical sounds alongside each other may help to counter the visualist bias in media studies and resemble more closely the lived realities of these two media in their multiple interrelations.

Attending to these points of connection is especially important in conceptualising the ways in which both photography and phonography operate in processes of both personal and social remembering. Even at a technical level, they involve the activity of recording and preserving and are invested with a high level of fidelity to their pro-graphic referent. They both seem to fix a sound or an image and send this forward in time as a record of the past. The perception of technical fidelity in image and sound has always affected how these media have been attended to. For a long time the popular reference to technologically mediated forms of music was, quite literally, that of 'records', while the terms pictorial or photographic

records carry a similar meaning, even if these terms of reference now sound a little old fashioned. But how do they work as historical representations? How do they help to generate historical meanings? In what ways do they transmit, or embody, or reflect memories and processes of remembering?

These questions are explored by considering how photography and phonography act as links between memory and history, how they enable us to connect with the past and how they constitute tangible traces of past time. Such issues are not easily decided, not least because the two media in question have become taken-for-granted as modern vehicles of remembering. Their remarkable qualities as media of memory have become immersed in the habitual fabric of everyday life, in the routine language we use to describe them and the unthinking ways in which we engage with them. It is therefore necessary to re-examine them in order to de-familiarise their ordinariness, and to suggest that, in some ways at least, these media of remembering are actually very strange.

Moving From Memory to History

The initial assessment of photography and phonography must involve a consideration of the way complex links are made through them between memory and history. This can be conceived as a distinction between on the one hand, personal or individual experience and how these media figure in the memory of experience, and on the other, social relations and cultural identities and how sounds and images contribute to their historical definition. The separate identification of these two dimensions is important, but must be kept loose. If the personal and public memory are kept rigidly separated, the distinction between them becomes a false one. For example, a collectively negotiated family past helps shape personal recollections of childhood, while personal memories of a foreign holiday may influence the way in which we respond to a collectively negotiated national past. The interplay between memories we see as personal, and the memories we regard as socially shared, constructed and communicated, requires an approach which can accommodate their mutuality, even though this may itself be a source of conflict and contestation. It is the ways in which memories operate rather than their content that is important. We talk of personal memories even if these are always formed in some way or another through social interaction, and we attend to the ways in which they are communicated outwards into the social world. Conversely, we talk of social memory even if this requires individual recognition and negotiation and we attend to the ways in which it is communicated inwards to particular social groups, communities and individuals across an uneven and divided social configuration. So at the same time as we

distinguish between personal and social memory, we need to understand them as belonging inextricably to the same process.

This distinction is of particular importance for thinking about how photography and phonography work as social memory and historical representation, and how the shift occurs over time from personal memory to historical representation. When a photograph was first taken of a particular individual, group or event, say a white Colonel of the Raj inspecting an Indian regiment, a blues singer on a New Orleans jazz club stage in the 1920s, or 1945 VE day celebrations in London's East End, this was usually for reasons associated directly with the individuals or groups involved. Any photograph of this kind could, in varying degrees, be connected with a broader sense of history or historical commemoration, such as the VE day celebrations when international and local events converged. But the emphasis in such technologically assisted forms of remembering, in it's original context of production, fell primarily on a distinct biography or set of locally intertwined biographies, on a specific social group or community.

Over the course of time, images of this kind often end up in a museum or historical text. In this changed context, their former personal meanings have, as often as not, become lost to time, erased from any significance still attached to them. They may be retained or regained to some extent in these new, specially dedicated locations, as a result of subsequent enquiry such as genealogical investigation, but the erosion of meaning becomes extreme when old framed photographs find their final destination on the wall of a pub or restaurant. Here the images and sounds of time past simply lend a vague sense of atmosphere or 'pastness' (Jameson, 1991: 20) to their new surroundings. Although, unlike photography, mechanically preserved music has generally always existed in the public domain, we may point to a similar erosion of meaning when old phonograph records are played, from whatever new format, as loose background association with a particular decade of the past century. The investment of personal meaning in a piece of music, or the sense in which it seemed to speak to a precise historical moment in the past, are then attenuated, and in some cases lost completely.

This shrinkage of personal relevance is accompanied by a comparative gain in the social meanings these images and sounds are ascribed and their value as historical representations. Where these were unlikely to have had any significance in the past, for the individuals and groups involved, they become considerably more salient as a result of the passage of time. This shift has direct bearings on how photography and phonography are experienced and understood. The ways in which they relate to remembering have also

altered. Among other things, there is no longer a recalling agent involved, one who consciously conducts the remembering directly and one to whom the memories are primarily directed.

The sensation of remembering that a popular song or piece of music can elicit is common, yet at times deeply intense. The sound connects us, in what would seem a very direct way, to a particular time in our past, perhaps quite long ago. It can recreate for us the texture of a specific experience, including the way it became assimilated into our own interiority and was felt in a quality we never quite put into words (and maybe cannot now). As Christopher Bollas has put it, music and remembering in such cases seem 'to elicit within us not so much a memory as an inner psychic constellation laden with images, feelings, and bodily acuities' (1993: 3). It is obvious that one piece of music did not play throughout our entire memories of school or college, yet it may only take one piece of music to sensuously evoke the memories or experiences of those times in our lives. The power of music and photographic images to work in this way is lost in the shift from personal to social memory. It is obvious enough as well that a particular social group, never mind a society or nation, cannot engage in a remembering process of this kind, and cannot evoke or be connected back to a specific experience in the past in the same way as an individual looking at a childhood photo or picture of a family member from an earlier generation. The representation associated with the image or music has now entered into a much wider network of relations through which the past is remembered and reconstructed.

Movements from personal to collective remembering and the differences that exist between them, should not be understood in terms of any authentic or genuine memory, clearly separable from a more fabricated or partial kind. All memory is selective, revised, added to and reshaped over time, especially as it is communicated outwards and reworked into textual forms such as a song or image. It is subject to the dynamics of forgetting and repression as well as the accumulations and alterations of ongoing experience. This should not detract from the power of particular memories in the way they are repeatedly illuminated by a photograph or piece of music, but it should inhibit any tendency to romanticise them. Powerful memories are in any case quite compatible with the productivity of social remembering, with how the intensely personal meanings associated with listening to, for example, a contemporary blues record in the late 1920s or a country song of the 1950s, have become subsumed into what these sounds are supposed to represent of the times and experiences of the past. What they represent historically depends on how they are socially remembered and how they contribute to the accumulation and operation of social memory, even though this may always be contested.

In neither personal nor public memory is remembering simply recalling the past as it was lived. Remembering involves negotiating different accounts of the past, some of which neatly correspond with one-another, and some which may be divergent or in conflict with each other. There is no one unified collective memory but rather a network of relations around which experiences are shared and stored as resources, along with the knowledge gained from previous interactions. While such knowledge about the past is always provisional, it works towards the establishment of some form of historical consensus. Social memory and historical representation are not purposeless, indiscriminate responses to an arbitrary past. It is through a loose consensus over meanings of the past, however argued over in detail, that social memory is achieved and the basis created for multiple subjects to share, if not the same understandings of the past, at least a shared knowledge of what is important in the past of a particular social group, or why that past is relatively neglected in a broader social formation. In this way social memory is registered and held by the remembering subject, not the social group itself, making it unnecessary to apply the remembering subject as metaphor in the realm of social or public memory.

Memory as a Temporal Field

It is necessary to consider how photography and phonography, as samples of time's traces, are experienced in radically different contemporary situations. There are undoubtedly occasions when an image or sound is experienced as sharply dissociated from the present, but what is of greater interest is when distance across time seems to collapse, dissolving any sharp dissociation from the past in the looking or listening experience. Notions of linear time make this experience difficult to conceive as time is marshalled in constant succession, prohibiting multi-directional movement between past and present. A temporal field that is able to dilate and constrict according to the responses we make to an image or sound can much more adequately accommodate this experience and locate it in a framework of temporal consciousness. The temporal field involved has flexible boundaries that allow the present, past and future to overlap and interact in the process of experiencing the musical or photographic text and engaging with it. The experience of image or sound is variously faceted, and focused on interrelating temporalities rather than durational time, for attention and response to photography and phonography is never confined to any particular tense. As sites of temporal negotiation, music and photography are imaginatively invested with understandings of the past rather than operating as fixed temporal structures in which time is reified as the past. This is how the phenomenological experience of photography and phonography should be considered. Such experience is significantly related to how such cultural technologies operate as forms of historical mediation.

In the song by Patsy Cline mentioned earlier, the singer looks back at her lost love, and uses photographs and phonograph records as vehicles of her remembering. Yet these are more than objects of memory for the singer. The loss of a flesh-and-blood lover is articulated through the mediated memories possessed by the singer, the artefacts of photos and records linking her back to a time when shared experiences and shared memories were one and the same. This suggests that, in terms of their representational value, photography and phonography contain a high level of fidelity to what they record and preserve. They seem to guarantee a past reality, the flesh-and-blood referent in the photographic image, the flesh-and-blood referent in the phonographic sound. Their technological fidelity of reproduction, in time and over time, is what seems to make them accurate and authentic. A photographic record visually preserves a face or an occasion, and a phonographic recording sonically preserves a musical performance. The resulting artefact seems unchanged and unchanging as it is taken up on various occasions in the future, when we look at a photo album, or slide a CD into the deck. Of course, in ways characteristic of both, music is a mode of producing meaning that unfolds through time, whereas a photograph is a representation of an instant extracted from the linear flow of time as it has been traditionally understood. They differ accordingly in their relation to memory. It is rare to find an individual who doesn't possess a collection of personal photographs that depict key events, places or people in their lives. The camera is brought out at special occasions: graduations, weddings, parties and holidays, documenting key moments in the life of an individual or group and acting simultaneously as a means of life chronicle and social integration. Phonographic music is not usually purchased with these kinds of temporal punctuation in mind, though subsequently it may acquire that significance. A key mode in which both photography and phonography acquire this significance as media of memory is when they create a response that is saturated with intense feeling.

This is directly allied to their ability to attest to a past reality apparently without code or method, so obviating the need for historical interpretation, for as Barthes put it in relation to the photographic image, referent and image exist in an indexical relationship through which engagement with the past is no longer 'a question of exactitude, but of reality' (Barthes, 1984: 80). Susan Sontag (1977) also emphasised the indexical character of photographs, as for instance when she described the photograph as 'experience captured'. The quality that Barthes called '*ça a été*' is the central change brought about by photography and phonography as forms of social remembering and historical representation. Their apparently uncoded actuality is the source of their symbolic potency. This is a common experience, but of course it is this experience that is nowadays regarded as critically naïve. It may be naïve, but that

doesn't alter the potency of the experience, a potency that may prove to be a catalyst of creativity.

This is how critics like George Lipsitz (2001) approach such resources as past forms of popular music. He suggests that phonographic records provide potent channels of communication with the past resulting in radical, and new, historicized cultural activity. Lipsitz details the role of record collections as shared memory allowing the development of new and innovative cultural forms: 'when similar record collections enable Steve Berlin, a white musician influenced by black rhythm and blues, to join a Chicano rock band on the basis of a mutual affinity for country and western singers Hank Williams and George Jones, we have gone a long way in the world in which "all that is solid melts into air"' (p.151). In a similar way, various women writers have negotiated the representational power of both photography and phonography in trying to reconcile their pre-feminist and feminist identities. Annette Kuhn (2002b), for example, has used her own photographs in this way to investigate her feminist identity and politically reconcile her childhood and adult senses of self.

Recognising the socially constructed nature of photography and phonography, but this doesn't account for the way they can get past our guard or cut through our habitual expectations to disturb us emotionally. They may drive home for us the disjunctions or frailties of continuity between present and past lives, or alternatively make such continuity seem immensely forceful and direct. Ideological constructs may well be implicated in such photographic or phonographic retrospection, but it is at once their connection with former flesh-and-blood referents and the loss of that connection as these are simultaneously conveyed to us that makes the experience so moving. Looking at an image of a long-forgotten era, or listening to a record of a singer from the 1930s, not only implicates their presence but also their inevitable death, reminding us of the transience of our own existence. As Sontag (1977) suggests, 'photography is the inventory of mortality' (p.70).

Photography and phonography convey a complicated mix of temporal continuity and discontinuity. They are isolated fragments from the past, quotations cited out of context, but with the power to act as mnemonic catalysts, to activate the process of remembering in a deeply moving way. The transformative nature of the photographic or phonographic text can be seen clearly in the action of the *punctum* in its historical specificity and contingency. As a feature of social and cultural knowledge, the *studium* covers such phenomena as unconcerned desire, polite interest, and casual mediocrity, resulting in a predictable generality 'of the order of *liking*, not of *loving*' (1984: 27). There is a tacit contract between media producers and consumers, as with news photos and pornographic images, where reiterated satisfaction of the

various expectations set up cumulatively add to and reinforce the *studium*. The *punctum* ruptures the *studium* and in the case of photography is characterised as the 'shock' of responses to photographs at the level of loving or hating (ibid: 41). The powerful connection of the *punctum* overrides historical distance and intimately collapses past and present in a moment of intense feeling. Photographs and musical records are perhaps more likely to have a *punctum* where the remembering constituted by the act of viewing or listening relates inwardly to a past experience or some aspect of our own identity, rather than to a general set of social and cultural meanings in which we make no particular investment. The *punctum* is an experience where the meaning of the image or sound is more than the sum of its formal semiotic components. Although, this doesn't mean that the *studium* and *punctum* are incompatible. The viewing of a friend's holiday photographs may well have meaning only on the level of the *studium*, but when an image is presented from that album which depicts a place that the viewer has visited, a place where certain experiences occurred, a *punctum* may be felt. It is also possible that they exist in tension with one another where personal memories are in contention with the social or cultural codes evoked.

For Valerie Walkerdine (1991) a photographic *punctum* came into existence through the very rejection of the *studium*. One of her photographs depicted an attractive, happy young child at the level of polite interest. This was punctuated by an alternative reading of the child-subject through an invocation of personal experiences of rage and being silenced during her childhood. The 'bad girl' *punctum* related to such experiences was in direct contrast to the placid 'good girl' meanings of the *studium*. More recently, Deborah Chambers has written of the family album as a 'sophisticated ideological device' in its representations of 'nuclear ideals' that also 'offers frameworks for holding other complex, unregulated desires and transgressive memories' (2001: 75). Potentially, photographs can operate either way, supporting the conventional obviousness of the *studium* or facilitating the unpredictable captivation of the *punctum*. Barthes's concept of the *punctum* was intended as an analytical tool for interrogating the photographic image, but we would suggest that, along with the visual *punctum*, there is also the aural *punctum* where music pierces, cuts through and penetrates in such a way as to be indistinct from the experience of it.

A detailed and vivid example of the aural *punctum* is provided by Lucy, one of Tia DeNora's informants in *Music in Everyday Life* (2000: 63), who spoke of the importance for her father of such music as the Schubert *Impromptus*, the Brahms *Double Concerto* and *Finlandia*, records of which he played as a source of solace when separated from his wife in the Second World War. When he died, Lucy turned on the car radio while driving home from choir practice and tuned directly into the *Double Concerto*: 'I just had to stop, and some

friends were coming behind, you know, and I was in floods of tears, and they said, "why don't you turn it off?" and I said, "I can't" and ... it was ages before I could listen to that, or anything like it without thinking of him'. The aural *punctum* of this experience disturbed her so deeply because it generated memories that were volatile fuel to the fire of her grief. It was this which pierced through the *studium* of musical expectations and reiterated satisfaction, but it also led to greater self-identity through subsequent realisation of her similarity to her father – or as DeNora describes it, the musical experience 'provided an impetus for Lucy to engage herself in self-modelling, projecting onto her self-conception a remembered set of characteristics of her father' (2003: 63). The phonographic *punctum* in Lucy's case was a key component in an alternating expansion and contraction of the temporal field of musical experience, and more broadly a complex layering of experience and memory, memory and experience, with music providing a key resource in 'spinning the apparently continuous tale of who one is', and acting 'as a medium with which and in which to think about, experience, and re-experience social reality' (DeNora, 2000: 63; DeNora, 2003: 65).

The intensity of the *punctum* is derived from the connectivity it fosters between past and present. The shock it delivers stimulates the creation of temporal meaning at a disturbing proximity, rupturing the banal continuity of the *studium's* steady movement through time. In this experience of the *punctum* resides a force for temporal creativity. The past becomes revived and vital and as such is allowed a renewed purchase on the present. Whether characterised by an intense pleasure or pain, it is always infused with a unique generative potential. Bringing the specificity and contingency of the past into sharp and potent relief in the present is a central precondition for historicity.

Divergent Forms of Remembering

Phonography and photography as cultural media, offer valuable material for attending to modes of secondary or indirect remembering and historical enquiry as well as personal ones. They can play a part in social remembering when the past evoked is not a past personally experienced. In formal historical work, sources have conventionally been organized into hierarchies of accreditation and, along with other media, they may then become the source of controversy and despondency in cultural criticism. For example, the television programme *Heartbeat* creates an idyllic view of northern English rural life in the early 1960s in part through utilising popular songs of the period. The songs utilised provide a key to this selective pattern, to how period and place become musically part of the desired visualisation of social memory even when there was no first-hand experience of the music. Music feeds into the

visualisation of social memory, and images feed into the musicalisation of social memory, in both motivated and unmotivated ways.

It may seem that the use of popular music of the past in TV serials and adverts contributes to a loss of times continuous flow bemoaned by postmodernist theorists such as Frederic Jameson. Such theorists interpret the role of contemporary popular media in social remembering as amounting virtually to its antithesis. The circulation of these texts in the public domain, unmoored from their specific personal or immediately local contexts, is said to contribute to an 'amnesiac culture' (Jameson, 1991). A vague association of pastness is said to be prioritised over contingent historicity so that the dialogue between past and present is attenuated in favour of a dichotomous relationship where the past is cast as irreducibly 'other'. The juxtaposition of old and new images and sounds then operates as surface style and pastiche, devoid of historicised meaning, that Paul Grainge calls the 'nostalgia mode' (2002). The TV pop talent contest which throws together, haphazardly and uncritically, quotations from various musical genres, or the image of a 1920s flapper on a nightclub wall, are claimed to involve such radical dislocations from historical context that social memory and historical meaning drain away and are lost to fleeting consumerist pleasures.

This may to some extent be a leading tendency in late modern culture in capitalist societies, and provides a useful account of the contemporary media landscape of which music is very much a part, the linking of this configuration to a loss of social and cultural memory is less convincing. The concept of a 'crisis of memory' is not new. Memory has been 'in crisis' since Plato's warning against the impact of the written word on active remembrance. The desire for a stable and continuous memory has been plagued by the fear of its instability. The capacity of the active participant as an agent in the creation of historical meaning is also drastically reduced in the assumption of cultural ahistoricity. Rather than being an active participant in the construction of meanings about the past, the subject is reduced to an undifferentiated unit who unreflectively absorbs messages (Harms and Dickens, 1996: 217). So understood, people are unable to make meaning where narratives are not constructed for them, and communicated to them, through a unified cultural text. Grainge's (2002: 6) selective adoption of postmodernist approaches to media texts is a far more useful approach, as we need to see photography and phonography as part of the modern media landscape in which they operate as sites from and through which social memories and orientations to the past are achieved. The complexity and plurality of the role of media technologies in a continued historically and mnemonically sensitive culture must not be underestimated.

The diverse and plural temporal experience of photography and phonography means that they can be variously responded to and drawn upon. They can also be interpreted in terms of two broad approaches – the melancholic and the hopeful. These approaches to cultural technologies have been with us since at least the time of correspondence between Benjamin and Adorno, and without wishing to strike false historical parallels, the same kinds of divergence can be seen in cultural criticism today, as for instance in the different takes on popular media and pastness of Jameson and Lipsitz. The most conceptually fruitful position, and the one I shall be adopting here, is fluid movement between these two camps of criticism. As forms of historical representation, photography and phonography seem to involve melancholy and hope, pathos and aspiration, acquiescence and resistance. They don't belong exclusively on either side but alternate, or work at once in dual dimensions, according to person and group, time and context. Their meanings are subject to historical change and the historicity of social and cultural experience. For example, Rajinder Dudrah has investigated the ways in which British Asian youths use British bhangra to negotiate Punjabi cultural memory in a displaced context, along with the relationship of their musical cultural heritage to black and western music (Dudrah: 2002). Respondents in Dudrah's study suggest that the fusion of traditional Punjabi beats and lyrics which refer to the Punjab with aspects of black music such as rapping allow both the evocation of memories of India, whether or not experientially based, and the generation of sites of shared knowledge and identity with other ethnic minority groups. Lipsitz himself suggests that the temporal meanings of music are ultimately contingent. He holds the musical technique of sampling, by which historical and cultural references are cited within a new musical work, as an example of phonography as 'dialogic, the product of an ongoing historical conversation in which no-one has the first or last word' (Lipsitz, 1991: 99).

Despite this, it is undeniable that phonography and photography may serve an orthodox *studium* rather than a subversive *punctum*, as for instance with the marketing of photography in the early twentieth century to reinforce the confinement of women to home and child care (Holland, 1997: 129; see also Rose, 2003). The gendered nature of photographic practices has particular implications for gendered remembering. As Kuhn (2002b) and Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have illustrated, waged and unwaged work in the mid-twentieth century were left unrepresented in favour of images of family unity. As such, the memories available to women through photographic images may limit the retrospective narratives of self which women are able to construct. The photograph is not only a key resource for personal memory work but is also significant in memory work undertaken in public spaces. The photographic image is staple evidence for the museum and has become an essential feature of the archive. The location of photography in these contexts has particular

implications for their specific role in remembering. Douglas Crimp (1995) has argued that in the space of the museum, photographs are treated as objects, decontextualised from the narratives in which they made sense and, as such, stripped of their plurality of potential meanings, while their use in bars and restaurants accords with Jameson's aesthetically generalised feeling of 'pastness'.

Tension over the veracity of photographic image have existed from the technologies very inception. In particular, the two dimensions of the photographic image as evidence and as manipulated ideal, have long co-existed in personal photography. In the West, Victorian high street photographic studios were prized for their ability to make the photographic image as flattering as possible by careful posing and 'touching up' the image (Holland, 1997: 116), but such practices have been widespread. Tobias Wendl (1999) traces the photographic techniques employed in Ghana to achieve desirable images. As in the West, retouching images according to social conventions of desirability, intelligence and status was commonplace. Later, the use of realistic painted scenery was used to situate the subject in a desirable social location, such as a well-appointed kitchen. So although postmodernist critiques of the image's relationship to an original referent are useful, the claim that we have entered a new and discrete age of temporal meaning is unsustainable. Postmodernist theory has nevertheless made historians more sensitive to the hermeneutic issues involved in attempts at bridging past and present and the multiple meanings associated with this task, not least because of the nature of the materials on which they draw.

Light and Shadows

In adding to the resources and repertoires of social remembering, photography and phonography have worked together to alter our understanding of transience. Media images and sounds are now, irrevocably, constitutive of social memory even if they cannot embrace its entire range. Before their invention, a piece of completed music or a visual impression remained only in human memory, and memory itself was bounded by individual mortality. Memories could be passed on, and even become part of vernacular oral traditions, but were still largely delimited by personal life-spans, as for instance in the first-hand, immediate experience of musical events and occasions. Delight in music or vision could also be transformed into something else, such as a poem or a painting, in order to help encapsulate and preserve the moment of delight, but what was represented was not the thing itself (or rather, was not taken to be the thing itself). In the reproducibility of their forms, both audio and visual media seem to have arrested transience or at least snatched certain passing moments and segments of past time from confinement to personal memory and individual

finitude. They appear to shine a light of unprecedented strength on the darkly obscured corners of the past. They appear to break the compact between evanescence and oblivion, even as we interpret them as 'historical'.

This is especially apparent when we're powerfully affected by an old photograph or an old piece of music. At their most potent, they are more than catalysts in regenerating memory; they exceed this capacity since they are constitutive of both what is historically represented and what is historically experienced, with the visual or aural *punctum* cutting through the illusion of '*ça a été*' or 'experience captured'. Phonography and photography do more than mediate memory and identity, experience and time. They are core materials through which memory and identity, experience and time are realised. They provide a way of thinking in the present about the past, but experience recollected is filtered through them, then as now. Photography appears to arrest time; phonography transcribes time in its sequential flow. Together they have transformed our sense of historical documentation and hence our understanding of the past. In some ways this is directly the result of their apparent neutrality in recording and preserving past events or, when we are so moved, in their ability to make us forget the fact of their mediation. Because we can look or listen back with them, photography and phonography seem less fallible than human memory, with its inescapable gaps, lapses, repressions and distortions. Their complementarity as seemingly veridical records of the past is likely to be strengthened by multimedia storage and reproduction, when musical sound and photographic image are united in the same digital format and combined in audio-visual memory packages, for mainstream television consumption, for example, or educational documentaries where realist codes of representation override questions of historical interpretation.

Questions over what exactly is being recalled in photography and phonography must continue to be asked and what they provide us with as records of the past must continue to be interrogated. The visual or aural *punctum* and the contrasting forms of temporality associated with these media are powerful in their immediate experience, but it may seem in the longer term that we are left with only the outer integument of what is past. The 'then' of recording and the 'now' of viewing or listening are starkly distinct, imparting an almost spectral quality to the delineation of what was once there, in some other world whose traces they embody. With an early photograph or phonograph record, we are faced with apparitions of something that is simultaneously left and lost. What is left is the visual image, or with music, its sonic residue. They haunt our cultural landscapes, taunt us with their apparently indexical reference to the past and the way this gives form to the way we're puzzled and moved by them. Their messages from the past are disembodied and always partially obscured in darkness. The

temporal distance involved cannot be crossed, except by the image or sound. These are all we have in making the passage.

In their everyday usages, photographs and records seem to be precious in permitting an unmediated access to the past, even creating the illusion of being the past itself. Old images and old music, caught within those configurations, may seem to take us back into the past and be perfect bearers of memory, but this is the illusion they create. Their limits conspire against those moments of contingency that can create a feeling of intense reciprocity between viewers and listeners, images and sounds. These two cultural technologies provide only the shadows of what has gone before; all they convey now are mere apparitions from the past. They cannot give us the social and cultural experience in its historical dynamics of continuity and change, its complex, shifting relations across and between what has gone before and what is happening now. They will never be experienced again.

The technological fidelity of representation in photography and phonography is vital to the way they are understood as accurate and authentic, but by the same token, it is precisely this quality of unquestionable mimesis that obscures the temporally constitutive experience of them as forms of remembering. Their symbolic power belies the elusiveness or contradictoriness of their meanings, flying in the face of historical movement – it all comes back, yet at the same time it is all, irrevocably, gone. The apparent perfection and completion of photographic or phonographic realism dazzle and seduce us with an illusion of transcendence, obscuring the ways that memory itself is mutable, changing as our lives change, moving and shifting along with the cultures in which they are indissolubly bound up.

Photography and phonography tell us something about historical experience but only within their limits as representational forms. They reduce the events, people, even time into visual or sonic textual form, and in doing so regulate the temporal meanings they allow. The way they seem to open up access to past reality is what Walter Benjamin called the 'magical value' of the photograph, as for instance when he wrote of David Octavius Hill's mid-nineteenth century photograph of a Newhaven fishwife as filling you 'with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly consumed in art' (Benjamin, 1979: 242-3). We may speak similarly of the 'magical value' of a potent phonographic record, for example an original recording of Billie Holiday singing 'God Bless the Child', which 'even now' as we hear it many years after it was recorded, is 'still real' for the intense feeling that seems to inform its performance and avoid its consumption only as 'art'. Benjamin referred to this qualitative value as a 'tiny spark of contingency', and in photography and phonography its recognition

can be intensely moving as it involves a dual reciprocal movement between the sound or image and those hearing or seeing it in a changed present. However, this movement back and forth is destroyed and it's spark extinguished, by the infinite reproducibility of photography and phonography, for it was equally Benjamin's contribution to the way we understand them to insist on the loss of aura, of the disenchantment of an aesthetic object resulting from its mechanical reproduction. Contingency and specificity give way to predictability and generality.

The ability of a song or image to connect us in a seemingly direct manner to the past may lead to a utopian conceptualisation of their historical potential, even permit them to seen as sites or resources of subversion and resistance, as we reflexively engage with the 'otherness' of the past. But this is only possible if we retain a sense of the contingency of our own historicity. Without it we are condemned to experience the sensations of the past yet be denied a context through which to make them meaningful. The case of migrant and diasporic experience illustrates this very sharply. To suggest that a Caribbean migrant in London may have listened to Caribbean music in order to retain in memory a Caribbean identity conceived as similar in character with that articulated in the Caribbean prior to migration is historically illiterate (Manuel, 1995). The migrant consumption of music doesn't provide a direct conduit between memories of the homeland and homeland identities on the one hand, and new geographical locations and changing cultural identities on the other. Migrant memory and experience have of necessity to negotiate a double dislocation – severance from home, and alienation abroad – where what is remembered changes and what is experienced changes what is remembered (Negus and Pickering, 2004: 128-137). It is only in this way that music, as a vehicle of memory, can help reconcile lived experience and a personal and collective past. What music means is always historically oriented both to then *and* now, and dependently linked to period and generation, so that its role changes over different life spans. Lipsitz (1991) has also investigated the ways in which the meanings of the phonographic text are subject to historical change and the historicity of social and cultural experience. For example, referring to the emphasis on community and creativity that has existed historically in black music and the resistance it provided against the tyranny of industrial time and space, he suggests that 'incorporating elements of Afro-American music into their own cultures enabled white working class musicians to taste in culture what they missed in life' (p.113). The re-imagining of black musical culture in new times and geographical spaces is a resistive and essentially creative act that, far from being amnesiac, utilizes the historical meanings of the music and employs them in the service of present needs and circumstances. This demands that we recognise the ways in which music as a medium of memory changes not only throughout

the life cycle and across generations but also in the different social contexts in which, over time, it signifies and acquires cultural value.

It is this historically specific experience of music as a form of social remembering that is easily obscured by phonography. Technologically recorded music has provided a sonic equivalent of the photograph in its fidelity of reproduction and in facile couplings of past and future. Photography and phonography appear to expand and enhance communication. They seem to ensure genuine contact with past events, people and performances. It is for this reason that they are felt to bring us 'closer to history'. But this is only a possibility and is never guaranteed. The opposite can just as easily be true, particularly in contemporary, media-saturated societies. Through the media of photography and phonography, alongside others, traces of past times are more abundant and available than they have ever been, but along with such an burgeoning of resources from the past, it appears that we have never been more isolated from the past than we are today. Many of the public applications and uses of past images and sounds encourage us to take what is historical for granted – as if it simply is what it is, in the sound or image – rather than objects to be interpreted in changed historical conditions. It is these changed historical conditions, and not their annulment, which make communication possible.

Retaining the integrity of temporal distance is the ground of historical interpretation, just as difference is the informing condition of communication. The overriding problem that photography and phonography pose is their apparent annulment of this distance and their denial of the changed historical conditions which demand interpretation. Such conditions often facilitate a shift of perception and perspective and so encourage the revision of historical meaning and understanding. This doesn't seem to happen with photography and phonography, or at least with many of the public uses to which they are put. The reciprocal communicative relationship between past and present vital for historical understanding is curtailed as we're left with stereotypical versions of pastness that are safe and utterly knowable, unable to shock us, change us, or make us think self-reflexively of our own historicality. In such uses of these media, what is conveyed is non-interpretable. The intractable, vibrant and contingent past is pushed aside in favour of forms of the past that conform to our own preconceptions.

Photography and phonography seem to suggest two things at once: intimate connection across temporal distance, and the complete impossibility of communication. The acuity of engagement that comes with the aural and visual *punctum* is always in paradoxical tension with a denial of temporal distance and historical specificity. It is in this that their

peculiar strangeness lies. We may be intimately moved by a singer whose poignant words were recorded decades ago, but how do we know if there is any correlation between the song and the singer's own emotions? We may be presented once again with a photograph of someone who is readily familiar, but who is utterly unknown to us beyond the bounds of their well-worn image. Unless we appreciate, and undertake the reconstruction of, the varying contexts involved in the production and consumption of photographic and phonographic records, we are left disconnected from the necessary conditions of interpretation. In isolation photography and phonography do not answer our questions of the past. Without historical contextualisation, they only go on repeating their own unchanging answers.

Chapter 3
Nostalgia

Introduction

The consideration of photography and phonography as media of memory in the previous chapter has raised the possibility that these two technologies of representation have encouraged a sentimentalisation of the past, a regard for the past that eschews unhappy memories and is fond rather than critical in orientation. Photography and phonography have made it possible, for the first time in history, to look back on the past in such a direct way by their appeal to the sensory rather than cognitive faculties. This directness seems to bypass critical reflection and encourage what has been commonly called nostalgia. But to what extent is the scope of nostalgia expanded by these technologies in modernity, and to what extent is a narrow or one-sided conception of nostalgia deployed in arguments predicated on acceptance of change and the need for continual renewal in modernity? These are the central questions this chapter seeks to address. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider how historical time has been conceived in modernity and the relationship of nostalgia to it, both as popular condition and as an academic tool.

The structure of historical time in modernity has long been the subject of philosophical and social-scientific investigation. Adequately conceiving the overarching temporal frameworks within which we live and act is vital if any ground is to be gained in the assessment of the ways that human agents orientate themselves to time and its passing. The emergence and theoretical characterisation of particular modes of temporal engagement in modernity has had resounding repercussions for our valuation of the past, the uses to which it is put and the ways in which we bring it into our consciousness. If these issues are to be pursued adequately, it is necessary to attend to characterisations of our temporal landscape as they have been traditionally understood, and to assess the value that these temporal formulations have in allowing us to make sense of our relationships with the past and present. We may then re-work and move beyond these potentially stringent frameworks where necessary and align our conceptualisation of time, temporality and its attendant modes of orientating ourselves to the past and present more closely, engaging with the multiplicity of ways that what-has-been, what-is, and what-is-to-be are negotiated in contemporary life.

Classical sociology has commonly asserted severe temporal dichotomies, if not a complete rupture between modern and premodern societies. These were largely weighted in

favour of the present over the past in their theorisations of this radical historical transition. Assuming the veracity of irreversible rupture has inhibited more balanced examinations of patterns of continuity across time, as change, progress and movement away from the past were the key issues of focus. Positive valuations of present over past were founded not only on views of the inevitability of linear progress forward to an improved future, but were also supported by evolutionism and historicism, and later by inflexible functionalist paradigms and theories of modernisation. A nostalgic yearning for the past has been constructed as the conceptual antithesis to progress and forward-oriented temporal dynamic. In creating this dichotomous pairing, the perception of progress as inevitable has been bolstered and it's orientation to the future is put forward as the only viable trajectory for temporal consciousness. Yet as the principle ideological components of the tenets of progress have been increasingly critiqued, it is increasingly difficult to know where to turn for any viable alternative to it's conceptual opposite nostalgia. It is possible to look back on the variety of different positions that were developed in response to the abrupt social transitions experienced during modernity, ranging from wholesale acceptance through gradual adjustment to either melancholy over unchangeable forms of social malaise or arguments for further radical change, but all of these seem flawed in some way or another, and so not available for adoption without considerable change and revision.

In light of these difficulties, it is vital to re-investigate progress's conceptual opposite and re-evaluate its efficacy as a mode of temporal action. In being pejoratively Othered as its binary opposite, nostalgia has become fixed in a circumscribed backwards-looking position. This not only closed down lines of active communication with the past, but also legitimated what was set up as its single, inescapable alternative, facilitated convenient and stereotyped versions of the past in favour of the present, and left time and space for only decidedly conservative reactions to modern times. Nostalgia became inextricably tied to a defeatist attitude to present and future, appearing implicitly to acquiesce in the temporal ruptures of modernity by the very assumption of this attitude. Simultaneously nostalgia was conceived as a semantic dead end, seeking to attain the unattainable, to satisfy the un-satisfiable, engaging in the endlessly fruitless task of reviving of the dead. Where the dogmatic belief in progress entailed an ardent longing for the future, nostalgia as its paired inversion entailed only an ardent longing for the past. Nostalgia only appears to arise in compensation for a loss of faith in progress, and for what is socially and culturally destroyed in it's name.

As the desire for what has become absent in a changed present, nostalgia for a lost time necessarily involves yearning for what is now not attainable, simply because of the irreversibility of time. Nevertheless, reducing nostalgia solely to this position leaves

unattended not only more general feelings of regret for what time has brought, but also more general questions for how the past may actively and productively engage with the present and future. The temporal emphasis in modernity has always been on the relentless superseding of historical moments and movement beyond existing conditions and circumstances. This emphasis, endemic to modernity, leaves no space, remedial or otherwise, for dealing with the experience of loss. It is as if this experience, being negatively valued, has simply to be overcome, regardless of the pain and pathos that may be involved. The greatest temporal value in modernity is conferred on what is temporary, and this disorientation from any sense of continuity or durability becomes increasingly problematic as it involves cutting away the grounds for active dialogue between past and present. All that is left is nostalgia's negative dimensions, as if, in the onrush of time, all we can do is mourn and lament what is lost. The sterility and obvious inadequacies of this conceptualisation for explaining our temporal experience of modernity, demands either the reconfiguration of the concept of nostalgia or an abandonment of it altogether if we are to deal more sensitively and holistically with the experience of loss.

Loss, and the experience of it, is an indivisible part of living in modernity, regardless of what form this appears in, or the time or place it arises. Loss can occur in radical forms through war, revolution or regime change, mass involuntary migration and emigration, and less dramatically through social mobility or social redevelopment and the dispersion of existing communities that have been built up over time. Change and attendant feelings of temporal dispossession or dislocation have altered how the past is seen and considered. This cannot be subsumed entirely within a sense of nostalgia as it is conventionally understood, not least because feelings of loss are at times commingled with a sense of social gain or liberation, or with efforts to regain what has been lost in new ways that actively engage with the process or consequences of change. Modernity has changed the very conception of loss along with the compensations that it provides, such as nationalism or invented traditions, but loss, lack and longing do not have any singular or absolute condition in modernity. It follows that this is the case with nostalgia, since nostalgia is the synthesis of the multiple sensations of loss, lack and longing.

Rather than dismissing it as a concept, nostalgia would benefit from an extensive reconfiguration in order to sharpen its critical potential. Rather than reducing it to the desire to return to an earlier state or idealised past, it is necessary to identify the desire not to return but to recognise aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future as a central dimension of the concept. Nostalgia is then no longer only a search for ontological security in the past, but also a means of taking one's bearings for the road ahead in the

uncertainties of the present. This opens up a positive dimension in nostalgia, one associated with desire for engagement with difference, with aspiration and critique, and with the identification of ways of living absent or diminished in modernity. When viewed in its dual dimensions, nostalgia can be both melancholic and utopian.

It is vital that this distinction is not conceived as yet another sociological dichotomy, for it is the way these two dimensions of nostalgia inform each other, in each particular case, that is central to expanding our understanding of modernity's temporal potential. There are instances where past-fixated melancholic reactions to the present prevail, and at other times utopian longings drift free of any actual ontological basis in the present, but in rethinking the concept, the key point of interest lies in the mutually constitutive interrelations of both dimensions of nostalgia, since it is there that the potential for sociological critique arises. Rethinking nostalgia as a sociological phenomenon by critically assessing how it has predominantly been viewed, how it figures as a concept of temporality, and how in its media forms it has been considered in the field of study now associated with social memory (see Olick and Robins, 1998 for an overview of contributions to this field) opens up new avenues of exploration and understanding in the way that individuals, social groups and whole cultures are able to interact with and make sense of different temporal dimensions in the context of late modernity. Rather than an abandonment of the present, nostalgia as a mode of temporal engagement may act in its interests. Without recourse to nostalgia as a concept, we are unable to conceive of the potential that the past has for the enactment of contemporary life.

Nostalgic Assessments

The term nostalgia is etymologically derived from the Greek *nostos*, meaning to return home, and *algia,* meaning a painful condition (Davis, 1979:1). It was coined by the Swiss physician, Johannes Hofner, in the seventeenth century, as a diagnostic label for what was then considered a disease with symptoms ranging from melancholia and weeping to anorexia and suicide. The apparent disease was related to prolonged and usually involuntary absences from home. Gradually, over the next two centuries, nostalgia became semantically unmoored from its medical basis, subsequently entering into both academic and popular vocabulary as a term referring to 'capriciously sentimental and variously commodified' forms of the past (Grainge, 2002: 20). By the time debate over the alleged condition and diagnostic uses of the term disappeared from medical discourse in the late nineteenth century, its metaphorical application, associated with a sort of homesickness for a lost past, had become its dominant meaning in ordinary parlance. This involved a shift from spatial dislocation to temporal dislocation, and the sense of feeling oneself a stranger in a new period that contrasted

negatively with an earlier time in which one felt, or imagined, oneself at home. The metaphorical use was always aided by the multiple crossovers of sense between people's orientations to time-space coordinates (as in the commonplace deixical uses of the phrases 'here and now' to denote the immediate present, and 'distant past' to denote the opposite of temporal proximity) yet over time that which the term stood in for became what was predominantly meant by the actual term itself.

Subsequent to this semantic shift, nostalgia has been deployed in many fields of study as a critical tool to interrogate the articulation of the past in the present, particularly in the investigation of sentimentally inflected mediated representations of the past, most frequently where there is an element of commercial exploitation or commodification at stake. The use of this category in such various academic domains as psychology, history and cultural studies creates difficulties of application and reference within a coherent explanatory framework. Taking it at its simplest, as a specifically modern concept nostalgia has been used to identify both a sense of personal loss and longing for an idealised past, and a distorted public version of a particular historical period or a particular social formation in the past. In much of the most recent work, nostalgia has been closely linked with the notion of collective, social or cultural memory as a way of attempting to explain how memories are generated, altered, shared and legitimated within particular socio-cultural environments, yet in both senses it is connected with the characteristic features of modernity, such as its relentless social uprooting and erosion of time-honoured stabilities, while both the phenomenon itself and commentary on it have intensified proportionately to the acceleration of social and cultural change during modernity and late modernity.

Historical acceleration in modernity has created a new sense of time, involving what Todd Gitlin has called 'a new velocity of experience, a new vertigo' (Gitlin, 1980: 233), which is in part associated with the construction and reconstruction of events by the mass media (see Appadurai, 1990, for a more general account of contemporary relations of time, space and culture). Nostalgia is a reaction to the ever increasing speed and vertigo of modern temporality, characteristically seen as a sop to the discomforts of this new sense of time. It rejects modernity's insistently positive valuation of the temporary and transient. In the face of this valuation, a desire to imaginatively return to earlier times is then felt to correlate with an acute disenchantment with an 'unbearable present' (Wagner, 2001: 82), and to involve an attempt to recapture a continuity and coherence perceived to be unavailable in the fragmented modern or late-modern environment (Smith, 1998; Lowenthal, 1989: 21). This is only one side of the story. Nostalgia may also be seen as seeking a viable alternative to the acceleration

of historical time, one that attempts a form of dialogue with the past and recognises the value of continuities in counterpart to what is fleeting, ephemeral and contingent.

The desire for an idealised past has been considered in two, quite different ways. On the one hand, it can be viewed as potentially dangerous in that it closes down the transactional value of the past in the present and results in various degrees of social amnesia (see eg. Doane and Hodges, 1987). There are various versions of this argument. For example, in considering the difficulties of developing or relying on a nostalgic relationship to the past, Svetlana Boym suggests that 'nostalgia too easily mates with banality, functioning not through stimulation, but by covering up the pain of loss in order to give a specific form of homesickness and to make homecoming available on request' (Boym, 2001: 339). In this assessment it fails both historical knowledge and the historical imagination. For Jameson (1991), an active relation to the past has become almost impossible in our contemporary condition, where we have lost a sense of historical location and are locked into an endless succession of depthless presents (cf Huyssen, 1995). On the other hand, nostalgia can be valued as potentially democratic, opening up new spaces for the articulation of the past and acting as a mode of assimilating this to the rapidly changing modern environment (see Baer, 2001; Davis, 1977). This contrasting optimistic valuation begins to acknowledge that nostalgia is not inherently negative; rather than an acquiescence in the face of uncontrollable change, a nostalgic relationship with the past can be viewed as enabling rather than inhibiting onward temporal movement. It may be 'shamelessly exploited' by those whom Jacques Le Goff has called the 'nostalgia-merchants', but a broad public interest in collective memory can also be seen as an expression of the *fear* of social amnesia or loss of historicity, even when this is 'awkwardly expressed in the taste for the fashions of earlier times' (Le Goff, 1992: 95).

The idea of temporal loss is central to the concept of nostalgia. The majority of literature on nostalgia refers to a loss of memory or historicity (Baudrillard, 1994: 44). Jameson (1991: 281) suggests that nostalgia involves the prioritisation of positive accounts of the past to the exclusion of less than pleasurable aspects of experience. History may then have little or nothing to do with its reality, and mediated representations of the 'past' may actually impair the development of historical awareness. Postmodernist and poststructuralist accounts of nostalgia successfully bring to account the integral role of the media in contemporary understandings of the past and the tenuous links their representations may have with historical realities and historical meanings. They also generally recognise how the articulation of the past in the media is a key component of contemporary temporality. However, these observations lend themselves far too easily to narcissistic presentism and to the assumption of a drastic loss of engagement with historical time, entailing a rejection of the

semantic possibilities of mediated time. Rather than dismissing media representations of the past in this way, a closer examination would suggest that it is possible to derive from them a more complex understanding of relations between time's traces and historical reconstructions, including the possibilities of irony and play in rethinking history and our various relationships to it.

If nostalgia is the defining feature of an amnesiac culture, then social and cultural memory are necessarily degraded. This permits only the negative components of nostalgia, confining its identification to such mass cultural impulses as surface style, stereotype, kitsch and pastiche. The critique of media nostalgia and retro cultural formulations of the past pays close attention to the politics of historical representation, raising questions over relative meaning, perspective and understanding as well as stratified forms of social remembering. The problem is not this in itself, but its restriction to only these questions, resulting in analytical one-sidedness. Here there is more than a passing resemblance to earlier forms of mass cultural criticism where the media audience was homogenised and atomised at one and the same time, so being stripped of active participation in everyday historical consciousness. At the same time, in examining how media texts communicate versions of the past, the postmodernist tendency of bracketing all history with subjectivist relations to it and intertextual representations of it should be assiduously avoided (Hutcheon, 1989: 113-14). This assumes that the past has no referents outside the circulation of textual representations, and that historical understanding is irrevocably and fatally compromised. Flagging up concerns over how the past is depicted, or efforts made to ensure that opportunities exist for minority groups to have their experience and past represented, are made irrelevant and unnecessary. Any sense of what is politically at stake outside of the texts themselves is lost.

Contemporary time is the experience of life lived in fragments. The hastening pace of change and the difficulties of semiotic overload contribute to the fragmentation of experience and our ability to assimilate it into meaningful narratives and ongoing life-processes. This can facilitate a sense of contemporary life becoming temporally unmoored and adrift, floating free from any grounded sense of the lived past. Yet this is neither inevitable nor absolute and can be countered in a plethora ways. Relinkings of past and present can be pursued and newly elevated symbolic importance may be attached to various forms of time's traces in the present. However, this has to be understood in terms of a cultural paradox, for as David Chaney has pointed out, while 'in the onrushing progress of modernity there has been a simultaneous discarding of the past', nevertheless 'in all sorts of ways mementoes and survivals mark a widespread concern for and sentimental treasuring of the past, of personal, communal and national heritages running through so much of everyday life' (2002: 152).

Postmodern theorists and proponents of the cultural amnesia thesis more generally, only grasp one side of this and so do not conceive it as a paradox. It can be summed up by saying that the more the past appears to be discarded, the more is its significance elevated in personal life and public culture. This significance includes romanticised attachments to the past, but is certainly not confined to them.

It is therefore necessary to identify the various ways in which people are putting the situated past into some form of narrative order for themselves, or in critically negotiating mediated representations of the past for their relations to collective identities and experiences. This does not mean that media consumption is everywhere, in every instance, characterised by a sensitive, contingent, and critical response to forms of historical representation as conservative and stylised use of the past is entirely possible, it is just not inevitable. If a precondition of nostalgia is dissatisfaction with the present, this illuminates one of the ways in which non-critical media representations of the past are legitimated, or at least allowed to pass by uncontested. The rise of the mass media throughout modernity has changed the face of public knowledge. In the contemporary period, negative news and alarmist issues are disseminated with increasing speed and scope within a culture of risk (Beck, 1999). The message may consist of yet another poll showing a further loss of public confidence in the integrity and credibility of politicians, yet another report of a possible terrorist plot set to devastate the civilian population, or yet another account of a further rise in criminal violence and harm to those who are socially most vulnerable, such as children and the elderly. Contemporary media provide abundant sources of knowledge about what people should worry about.

Uncertainty and insecurity in contemporary life creates an atmosphere ripe for a maudlin longing for the past, or for a past fondly reconstructed out of selectively idealised features, and again the media help to fill this ground even as, in other dimensions of their output, they serve to undermine it. A representational cycle of negative present and positive past promotes meanings made by means of opposition, contradistinction and dichotomous contrast, rather than in terms of the more ambiguous, unsettled and contested relations between past and present. Setting apart and glorifying the past denies its transactional role in the present, while the latter, although more ontologically unstable, serves to open up the past and present and allow them to be interrogated in view of one another. Historical meaning is popularly constructed and understood in both ways, at different times and in different contexts, rather than just one or the other being the mode in which nostalgic assessments of social and cultural change are made.

Historical Assessments

This distinction is often mapped on to academic historical practice. In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton (1989: 13) suggests that a key aspect of historical work is its inferentiality. Through the process of cross-questioning the evidence available to them, historians can extract 'information which it does not explicitly contain or even which is contrary to the overt assertions contained in it'. They are 'able to reject something explicitly told them in their evidence and to substitute their own interpretation of events in its place'. Through such critical practice, historians can remain relatively independent from the bias of social memory in order to achieve the most objective accounts of the past possible. What they may infer from the historical evidence is then set in direct contrast with an affectively appealing nostalgic relationship to the past and as such provides a set of benchmarks for distinguishing between different articulations of the past and different forms of historical representation. So, for example, the metonymic shortcut in popular iconography which can immediately evoke a period and facilitate a nostalgic response (the Beatles in line crossing over a zebra crossing, or Alberto Korda's famous photograph of Che Guevara, are two examples from the 1960s) can be compared with the systematic reconstruction of a period, event or biography which involves an awareness of the remaking of historical meaning and an attempt to generate new historical knowledge, new combinations of such knowledge or new interpretations of whatever knowledge is already scholarly available.

This is a common and conventional way of distinguishing between critical historical practice and a sensual, nostalgic longing for the past, but caution must be exercised so as not to polarise the two in a fixed hierarchy of orientations to the past and to historical knowledge. The historian is in no sense immune to social memory or the force of iconic images, nor is it the case that social memory or symbolic figuration consist entirely of nostalgic appeals to the past. More importantly, nostalgia is not confined to trivialised mass representations, or sentimentalised expressions of regret and yearning for times past, as these may be found in historical tourism or advertising culture. This is the crux of the matter; nostalgia is more complex than its typically banal formulation, and covers a range of ways of orienting to and engaging with the past. Polarising historical objectivity and nostalgia in memory work as if they are respectively the cardinal virtue and sin of historiography is to underscore crude versions of the concept of nostalgia, and provide a dubious means for maintaining the legitimacy of history as an academic practice. Conventionally, this has produced a hierarchical ranking of accounts in terms of trustworthiness, authenticity and authority, with professional history at the apex and nostalgia at the base, regardless of whether this involves media historical representations or vernacular forms of social remembering. These reductive

and unbending distinctions have been called into question, and so should instead be reconceived as a continuum, 'with history at one end, nostalgia at the other and memory as a bridge or transition between them' (Cook, 2005: 3).

This is particularly appropriate because, as a principle measure of historiographical value, objectivity has been subject to rigorous and extensive criticism. What is more practically and theoretically workable than any strict notion of objectivity is the degree of critical questioning that is operative in any transactional engagement with the past and with time's traces as these have been searched out and gathered together as part of the practice of historical reconstruction. This provides a more satisfactory means of assessing the intellectual scope of either academic or media history, and the extent to which it encourages reflexive connections of past and present (see e.g. Nora, 1996). When that scope is narrow or when, for instance, past and present are conceived in terms of deterministic causal relations, historical representation can be identified as providing little alternative to banal forms of nostalgic longing.

It is of particular value to consider academic and media history alongside each other as, for a variety of reasons, they are often set in contrast with one another. Although the motivations for this are in themselves questionable, here they considered in conjunction in order to promote and operate with a more fruitful, broader notion of what it means to engage with the past in a productive and imaginative manner. Although they are necessarily or invariably absent in mass-mediated treatments of the past, Baer (2001: 492) suggests that 'critical reflection and response' are characteristic of a significant relationship with the past. Engaging with the past becomes significant when it involves seeing past and present as dialectically related and refusing the temptation to collapse them into each other. This is where Jameson's account of the concept of historicity is relevant, for he claims that this allows a 'perception of the present as history; that is a relationship to the present which defamiliarises it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterised as a historical perspective' (Jameson, 1991: 284). Historical engagement is therefore about far more than the writing of academic history. It is a way of engaging with the past through which the present can be seen in the interrelated contexts of past, present and future. It is contingent and fluid, open to scrutiny, contestation and change but, despite it's collapse being a stimulant for creativity (as we saw in the examination of memory and mechanical reproduction in the previous chapter), ultimately historicity is dependent on maintaining the integrity of the distance and distinction between past and present.

The importance of history outside the academy is acknowledged in what has become known as the heritage debate (see e.g. Samuels, 1994; Lowenthal, 1997), but the key protagonists tend at times to rely implicitly on the hierarchical ranking of history, memory and nostalgia and so fail to get properly to grips with the complex set of processes involved in publicly representing, consuming and understanding the past (see e.g. Hewison, 1987). The distinctions made in criticism of the 'heritage industry' between nostalgia and history or nostalgia and authentic memory are nowhere fully investigated or conceptualised, making it unclear how to differentiate between positive and negative representations of the past. Raphael Samuel's critique of what he terms 'heritage baiting' (1994: 259) targeted a critical underestimation of, and lack of imaginative sympathy with, the way in which 'heritage industry' and its diverse practices have democratised the past, or at least facilitated progress towards this goal, even where this has appealed to nostalgic sentiment. Although this is not to claim that Samuel provides a comprehensive account of the distinction between reductive and democratic uses of the past, he does make the problems of nostalgia as a conceptual tool evident by contrasting popular negotiations of the past with the intellectual presuppositions of the heritage critics. Despite a tendency on his part towards cultural populism over critical engagement, Samuel's examination of the proliferation of local museums and the amateur historian, archivist and oral history projects, serves to contest the claim of left-wing critics that heritage is ideology through and through, and as such inherently serves the interests of a bourgeois agenda which diminishes or glosses over the democratising power of popular historical practices. Samuel's contention that the widening of popular participation and grass roots activity has opened up a plurality of interpretations, memories and narratives of the past that were previously neglected or suppressed in deference to dominant historical accounts, suggests that heritage critics and postmodernists alike are totalising in their commentary of late modern interactions with the past. Behind their backs, nostalgia has arisen to serve or stand in for a critical and subversive potential where other resources seem inadequate. Assessing the historical value of these interactions will always remains difficult, but it is nevertheless part of a continuum with history and not utterly divorced from it.

This is why nostalgia is sometimes used as a critical tool in assessing academic as well as popular history, as infusing historical work with some avowed preference, if not nostalgic longing, for a previous mode of representing or engaging with the past, is an abiding temptation. As far back as the 1970s Leonore Davidoff was warning fellow historians of women's history against catching historical heroines 'in the amber of a new feminist hagiology', while more recently, in writing on feminist fiction and social remembering, Gayle Green has been accused of falling prey to nostalgic bias in seeking to revive a former age of active feminist memory (Davidoff, 1974; Green, 1991; Tannock, 1995). Stuart Tannock

suggests that the only way to circumvent this trap is to acknowledge the existence of multiple nostalgias – some productive and socially useful and others less so. This is exactly the case. Nostalgia is not a unitary condition. It is subject to circumstance, motivation and interests, and over both time and space, to degree, variation and change.

It may seem that this entails conceiving of nostalgia in such a broad way that the concept is in danger of losing any critical edge it may have had. In practice, the opposite is the case. It is not so much its lack of specificity that is the problem as the tendency to see it in a singular and deterministic way. The problem is in not accepting and keeping in play its multiple senses and manifestations. For example, it is sometimes assumed that in applying the term to an audience's ways of thinking and relating to the past, it can likewise be applied to cultural texts, as if particular texts are inevitably tied to specific responses. Polysemy is played down and causal relationships inferred. Fred Davis (1979) uses nostalgia interchangeably in this way to refer to both the characteristics of media and other cultural artefacts, and the temporal orientation and consumption practices of media audiences. This conflates the workings of the media's relationship to the past and specific practices of media consumption. Postmodernist conceptions of nostalgia also fall prey to an assumed relationship between audience and text, suggesting that the reduction of meaning via processes of media representation are passively accepted by the audience, resulting in loss of meaning at the site of reception. An investigation of the ways in which audiences may actively engage in the cultural making of meaning is not considered. The interaction between different sites of meaning-making must be investigated if we are to move nostalgia away from a nebulous characterisation of a particular orientation to the past, and engage instead with the distinct and specific ways in which contemporary interaction with the past is enacted.

Media Assessments

Davis's conception of the media production of nostalgia is centrally concerned with the self-referential nature that mediated nostalgic remembering involves. Rather than remembering experiences, we are more likely to remember mediated experiences and as such, mediation of the past is a process by which the media can fix and limit social memory (ibid: 130). Lynn Spigel (1995) highlights this in her study of the increasing recycling of old television sit-coms. She suggests that the commercial motivation and practices of their syndication have profound effects on the narratives of the past available to people in the present and therefore on their historically situated understanding of their own situation. Despite problems arising from the implied division between her students' media-informed temporal knowledge and her own, which is experientially informed, politically inflected yet apparently unmediated, Spigel

highlights the key role of television re-runs in women's sense of the past and their notions of the 1950s as compared to the present.

This supports an analysis of the ways that the uses of the past in contemporary media contribute that to an historical imagination. It is clearly important to address an environment where the past is sensuously rather than critically evoked, where the meanings available are juxtaposed and jumbled rather than represented in an integrally cumulative way and instantly to hand rather than represented through a process which itself exists through time. In refusing the notion of an amnesiac culture where the media treatment of the past is of no consequence as it has no historical meaning, the effects of processes of mediation need to be made central to an examination of the media construction of the past. This involves keeping the different senses and modalities of nostalgia in view of each other, but the difficulty of this is exaggerated by lack of attention to how it is diversely articulated. Where nostalgia primarily entails a relation between the modern human subject and the past as this is temporally mediated by cultural texts, there is surprisingly little attempt to discuss the modes of representation and operation involved in the communication of nostalgia. To return to Davis, the media are simply assumed by him to use particular modes of representation that will 'touch nostalgic "chords" in the audience' (1979: 82). It can be accepted that nostalgia is a way of thinking and feeling rather than being directly produced or constituted by consuming nostalgic media texts, but there are nevertheless cultural artefacts which facilitate nostalgia as a way of feeling and thinking. Although Davis's analysis identifies a new way in which we relate to time and the past in late modernity, he is vague about the specific ways in which this operates. He fails to explain how the media act to elicit nostalgic responses, assuming that what is really at issue are the pre-existing psychological structures associated with such responses. Davis also fails to engage with the mechanics of representing the past in a nostalgic way, so the question of 'what constitutes a nostalgic media text?' is not answered.

Davis's account is just one example. The general literature on nostalgia offers little in accounting for *why* the media represent the past in particular ways, and this absence leaves the door open for reductionist accounts. Where the negative sense of nostalgia prevails, there is a tendency to neglect the reciprocal relationship between audience and media in generating the conditions for making sense and meaning. When used as a critical tool, nostalgia easily obscures these complex relations in the meaning-making process, being presented instead as a unified concept that claims to encompass the role of audience and text. Conceptually, the term then lacks analytical purchase on the relationship between media audiences and the production of texts and cannot adequately grapple with the ways in which either media texts or media consumers are oriented to the past. Davis does at least attempt to develop a

sociology of nostalgia which suggests that nostalgia itself is socially useful, helping cultures adapt to rapid change, as well as hampering a more developed historical understanding. Nostalgia is thus charged with limiting social memory yet being necessary to it. This is helpful, at least to the degree that it acknowledges productive or contestatory applications of nostalgia.

To the extent that nostalgia characteristic of Western modernity testifies to 'the destabilisation of everyday life', Patrick Wright has pointed to its 'critical and subversive potential' as well as its more obvious conservative or reactionary forms. This includes 'articulations of cultural particularity' in everyday historical consciousness that are not represented in mainstream or dominant versions of the 'national past'. Although this mode of consciousness has its jingoistic expressions, it can also testify to 'radical needs which – finding neither realisation in present everyday life nor recognition in the complacent grandeur of official symbolism – may still be reaching out to "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger"', as Walter Benjamin famously put it (Wright, 1985: 26). This helps to keep in view the politics of memory and representation. What Davis doesn't acknowledge is that delimiting memory may result in an inability to contest dominant nationalistic accounts of the past by referring to and drawing on the situated experience of particular groups or generations, whereas what Wright does acknowledge, in his rewarding assessment of historical experience for those 'living in an old country', is that issues of order and power cannot be divorced from ways of relating to the past in either social memory or historical reconstruction.

More recent approaches to nostalgia in memory studies display rather different shortcomings. Too often they suffer from a simplistic approach to the media. Hoskins's (2001) assumption that the media operate in a similar way to individual or collective memory proves problematic as he suggests that traumatic, negative or difficult memories are 'repressed'. Quite how 'repression' fits conceptually with the selective presentation, reproduction and discarding of particular images of past or present because of media assumptions about audiences and consumer tastes or media values concerning cultural styles and fashions is left unexplored, so denying the role of the media in actively forging memory across a social formation. In a more recent article, Hoskins (2004) continues to overlook the plurality of audiences and differences between social, collective memory and media representations of the past, as if a co-ordinated unified media generate homogenous narratives that circulate uncontested. Postmodernist theorists also simplify the role of the media in representing the past, suggesting that decisions over representation are dictated (rather than contingently influenced) by what has previously been used to represent an event or period.

This is an ahistorical view of media representation since any sample of it is not made once-and-for-all and simply recycled. If this were the case, historical meaning would rapidly become totally derelict rather than being managed or limited by representational practices. Postmodernist accounts effectively remove agency or intent from representational practices. It is as if their association with a supposedly redundant humanism leaves these terms damned beyond redemption.

In attempting to develop a more sophisticated conceptual understanding of nostalgia, it is at the very least necessary to accept Paul Grainge's (2002) differentiation between nostalgia as a structure of feeling or affective and experiential discourse and nostalgia as a commodified style or commodified set of practices. He describes the former as the nostalgia mood and the latter, the nostalgia mode. His notion of the nostalgia mode is reliant on postmodernist notions of the contemporary representational environment. The claim that we inhabit a media landscape characterised by hyper-reality, pastiche and repetition provides a useful perspective on how the media represent the past from a restricted pool of textual representations, thus highlighting the process by which media representation of the past is often dependent on the use of an iconographic form of communication. The co-existence of this with a nostalgia mood stops short of the postmodern curtailment of audience agency, suggesting that modes of representation are inextricably linked to meaning-making processes but have the potential to limit rather than determine their outcome. This more cautious and balanced account is helpful, but Grainge's appropriation of features of the postmodernist account of the contemporary media is not unproblematic. In discussing nostalgia as a cultural style, he inherits some of the difficulties of postmodernist claims of declining referentiality where 'increasingly sophisticated media appropriate images from a diversity of social and historical contexts,' so generating a 'recombinant culture' where media texts are consumed on the basis of surface appearances, leading to a complete loss of meaning (Harms and Dickens, 1996: 211). Although not claiming a complete loss of meaning, Grainge asserts that, as an aesthetic style of memory, monochrome representation defers a text's content to its evocation of a generalised feeling of pastness (Grainge, 2002: 59) This fails to explain why particular images or texts are regularly used as symbolically representative of a period, denies that this has any consequences for historical meaning aside from generating an intangible sense of the quality of being past, and ignores questions of order and power raised in the systematic manipulation of the way the past is represented. In his reliance on these assumptions, Grainge's notion of a nostalgia mode cannot move beyond the circulation of images themselves in order to explore their repercussions for social understandings of the past.

Although the differentiation between the affective nostalgia mood and the nostalgia mode as a commodified style or set of practices is a useful one, there are at least potential difficulties with the distinction when the notion of mode is conceptually based on the notion of form overriding content as a site of textual meaning. Grainge concurs with Ien Ang's (1996a) rejection of totalising postmodernist claims that cultural amnesia is a *fait accompli* and so suggests a potential association between memory and the nostalgia mood. He criticises postmodernism, as it has been here, for failing to recognise the agency of the audience by reducing them to an unthinking collectivity who passively absorb the meanings communicated to them via the media, thus denying them a role in meaning-making processes. He goes on to claim that meaningful historical narratives can continue to be produced 'through the recycling and/or hybridisation of past styles' (Grainge, 2002a: 6). The suggestion that meaningful narratives can be made from texts where the referent is semantically secondary to its stylistic attributes elides the critical distinction between mediated and broader forms of social remembering. The importance of aesthetic style cannot be ignored as it is central to the potential temporal meanings of a text, but to systematically foreground this over referentiality as a locus of meaning necessarily implies that a capacity to generate meaningful historical narratives has been seriously compromised. Grainge is right to suggest that among the multiples senses and applications of contemporary nostalgia are those which are not only associated with feelings of loss for some aspect or time of the past, but also those associated with retro markers of taste or style in the present. The problem is that these tend to blur into each other as Grainge gets his moods mixed up with his modes and runs together consumption practices, lived experience and diverse public treatments of the past, raising serious doubts over whose historicity is waning.

Conclusion

Over the course of the past century, nostalgia has become the *bête noire* of cultural critics, sociologists and historians. It cannot, indeed should not be denied, that nostalgia can delimit or diminish everyday historical consciousness as well as undermining the credentials of historical narrative. It can certainly operate ideologically or carry convenient ideological meanings, as for instance when it acts as a sop to the ravages of progress. Renato Rosaldo has written of imperialist nostalgia in this respect as 'mourning for what one has destroyed', so that 'putatively savage societies become a stable reference point for defining (the felicitous progress of) civilised identity'. He adds: ' "We" (who believe in progress) valorise innovation, and then yearn for more stable worlds, whether these reside in our own past, in other cultures, or in the conflation of the two' (Rosaldo, 1993: 69). This point of criticism is not only valid, but can also be seen as supporting the argument that the meanings of nostalgia

are multiple because culturally and historically specific. Nostalgia is neither an absolute nor singularly universal phenomenon.

Jo Tacchi (2003) illustrates this point in citing Serematakis' (1994) explication of the difference between the American notion of nostalgia, which is characterised as trivialising romantic sentimentality, and the Greek notion of nostalgia which is understood as desire or longing with a burning pain to journey (Tacchi, 2003: 287-8). Tacchi suggests that these varying interpretations have different semantic consequences, where the American understanding forecloses the possibility of the past having any transformative role in the present whilst the Greek conception evokes a range of bodily experiences to negotiate the past and as such allows the past a transactional role in the present. The continued unqualified use of a term laden with culturally specific meanings prevents a far-reaching and transferable analysis of the mediation of the past.

It has been seen how 'heritage-baiting' has relied on a hierarchical set of historiographical distinctions. The objection to this conceptual reliance is not made in denial of the fact that constructions of national heritage are commercially exploited, all the way from Disney's pseudo-town Celebration, to retro fashion stylings, or of the ways in which, over the past twenty five years, heritage has been used ideologically in shackling imagined continuities to ruthless neo-conservative drives for economic change (see Corner and Harvey, 1991). This critique is directed against the relentless use of nostalgia as history's negativised Other. 'Baiting' may be the best term when it relies on simplistic notions of capitalist manipulation, but obviously does not apply *tout court* to the cultural critique of uses of the past in more general terms. As a result Patrick Wright's analysis of heritage sources of social nostalgia is a much more compelling account than that offered by Hewison, among others, for what he seeks to explain is their popular appeal, in all their complexities and contradictions (see McGuigan, 1996: 116-34). Nonetheless, a constant tendency to slide inexorably towards either cultural elitism or cultural populism continues to pervade critical assessments of nostalgia. In both cases an idealisation is involved. This tendency has a longer history than the 'heritage debate' itself as it has been active in the development of anthropology, sociology and critical theory over the course of the last century.

When the idealised past of premodern societies has been used sociologically in contrast to the failings of modern societies, what has often been invoked is a mythical stability, unity and ontological security, so drawing on various incarnations of Tönnies's polarization of community and society, or any of the other temporal dichotomies mentioned at the start of this chapter. Either implicitly or explicitly, nostalgia has also been characteristic

of elite criticisms of mass culture where, as before, a stark before/after historical scenario posits premodern art as having 'an organic relationship to the community expressing ritualistically its natural forms of production and social relationships' (Stauth and Turner, 1988: 510). The concept of the folk society in anthropology and folk life studies relied on exactly such an assumed organicism and in some cases supported an anti-modern reaction to so-called mass culture in ways closely resembling to Rosaldo's 'imperialist nostalgia' (Pickering and Green, 1987). Georg Stauth and Bryan Turner have shown how nostalgia informed the development of German social theory from Marx to the Frankfurt School, and especially the cultural critique of Theodor Adorno. To the extent that critical theory and mass culture criticism relied on the dichotomy of 'high' and 'low' culture, they were both elitist and nostalgic, 'looking backward towards a period in history when there was a greater integration between life and art, feeling and thought' (Stauth and Turner, 1988: 518). Postmodernist theory has involved the critical deconstruction of this dichotomy to the extent that it is now unsustainable as a basis for aesthetic evaluation, whether of popular culture or art music and the fine arts, none of which in any case are unaffected by the cultural industries. Whether an egalitarian potential resides in cultural commodities and modern forms of consumerism, since they are in principle open to all, remains debatable, but it is certainly the case that 'mass' cultural critique is now constantly beset with having to avoid an elitist disdain and nostalgic withdrawal, seeing contemporary culture only through the distant lens of melancholia. Some form of nostalgic pathos underpins many of the critical objections that have been levelled against new media, whether of the early twentieth or early twenty first centuries.

As these examples show, nostalgia has never been the preserve of the 'masses' or the 'cultural industries'. Nor can it be reduced to a final or unitary definition, since its meanings and modalities are culturally and historically diverse. It certainly cannot be confined to the Disneyfication of the past or to selective postmodernist pastiche, as in such nostalgia films as *American Graffiti*. Nostalgia is an easy commercial ploy, whether it's rock 'n' roll, Christmas cards or TV programmes about the Second World War that are being marketed. And no one is completely beyond seduction. Even momentarily, we are all prey to nostalgia, particularly where a vehicle of personal memory, such as a photograph of a dead parent or lost lover, may touch us emotionally. Certain media of communication and certain artforms may reach human consciousness more directly in this respect than others. Music can carry a powerful affective or sensuous charge and can act as the catalyst of moving surges of memory. By extension, music also has a widespread association with an idealised lost past, and is claimed to be 'able to conjure forth the lost qualities and goods associated with it' (Flinn, 1992: 89). In cinematography it is music that has often born the burden of nostalgia, functioning 'as a

sort of conduit to connect listeners – and commentators – to an idealised past, offering them the promise of a retrieval of lost utopian coherence' (ibid: 50). This utopian element can thus be present in many 'mass' cultural commodities, and not just in the reified ideals that the categories of 'folk' or 'art' music have been made to carry. Carol Flinn has suggested that the investment of classical Hollywood film scores in nineteenth century romanticism was part of 'a wider ideological nostalgia of the time' that 'seemed to provide an escape from then current deficiencies, both real and perceived', as well as 'a source of restored plenitude and unity'. The historical irony in this is that for late nineteenth century romanticism, the model for integrity and strength was found in Hellenic culture: 'Like Hollywood's interest in romanticism, romanticism's own interest in Hellenic totality can be understood in terms of a desire to exceed contemporary experience, to get beyond the sense of social, economic, and subjective fragmentation or impotence' (ibid: 49-50).

It is not only irony that is at play in nostalgic enterprises and experiences. Nostalgia can only be properly conceptualised as a contradictory phenomenon, being driven by utopian impulses – the desire for re-enchantment – as well as melancholic responses to disenchantment. It is far too simplistic to call it 'a flight from the present', as the philosopher Harry Moody described it (Moody, 1984: 161). Instead, it can be both negatively and positively charged, and so 'can be conceptualised as conveying a knowing and reflexive relationship with the past, as a yearning for a better but irretrievable past, or, in more sceptical accounts, as emblematic of an engrossing but ultimately fabricated approximation of the past' (Drake, 2003: 190). Tony Blair's accusation that 'countries wrapped in nostalgia cannot build a strong future' glosses only its negative dimension (*Sunday Times*, 5/4/1998). Nostalgia in popular culture doesn't necessarily operate with the dichotomous before/after scenario we have seen associated with classical sociology and critical theory. More commonly, it is manifest in an ambiguous relation to the past and present, as for instance in the music of migrants, where a sense of loss associated with the past coexists with a sense of longing associated with the future. 'Migrant music epitomises dream and nostalgia combined', one example being Portuguese fado and its expression of 'a sorrow that was almost hope' (Connell and Gibson, 2003: 161-2).

In analytical terms nostalgia cannot be set against 'strong' history or a 'strong' future, but its intimate connections to both historical practice and diverse forms of social remembering must be reconceived, for 'where history suppresses the element of disavowal or fantasy in its re-presentation of the past, nostalgia foregrounds those elements, and in effect lays bare the processes at the heart of remembrance'. This may produce 'knowledge and insight, even though these may be of a different order from those produced by conventional

historical analysis, and may be experienced in different ways' (Cook, 2005: 4). In this adequately nuanced estimation, rethinking nostalgia 'may involve a redrafting of the techniques and conventions of historical analysis to take on board the dialectic between memory and history, holding together objective analysis and subjective response in a productive tension' (ibid: 17). This is close to the argument put forward here, which seeks a rapprochement of history and memory and the fields of study associated with them. Rethinking nostalgia offers one way of taking on this task, because it means overcoming the opposition between history and memory just as much as it entails refusing to set off melancholia and utopia against each other.

If the future doesn't come into being through forgetting, through denying or dismissing the past, especially when the present is judged to be in some sense flawed or unsatisfactory, the central concern is then with forward-looking uses of the past, of the past as a repository of resources for the future. These have always to be critically negotiated and drawn upon, whatever history is under consideration. This form of critical identification is with what has been passively or actively set aside and neglected in the present. For example, the demands of certain subaltern groups for social justice and a fairer future are at least partly fostered 'by vigilantly returning to the past, reinvestigating the past over and over again in order to find places and moments of resistance to oppression that might open up a better future' (Oliver, 2001: 135). For groups like these, the past has long been a locus of possibility and source of aspiration, of providing a way of imagining 'present impossibilities becoming possible in the future', for 'the future opens into otherness only insofar as the past does too' (ibid: 136; see also Pickering, 1987 for one example utilising popular song in this way). When this reciprocal movement is operative, nostalgia becomes an action rather than an attitude, showing how the politics of nostalgia are realised in its applications rather than being inherent in the affective phenomenon itself.

Nostalgia arises because of the divergence of experience and expectation generated by modernity, but this is not a singular or fixed condition (Koselleck, 1985; Pickering, 2004). It is not always and everywhere 'the opposite of utopia, but, as a form of memory, always implicated, even productive in it', for, as Huyssen suggests 'it is the ideology of modernisation itself that has given nostalgia its bad name, and we do not need to abide by that judgement' (1995: 88). Nostalgia as retreat from the present and nostalgia as retrieval for the future are not mutually exclusive, any more than either impulse are the preserve of dominant or subordinate groups. Retreat and retrieval are elements in every impulse and enactment of nostalgia, and this ambivalence 'is worth keeping in mind when considering the many ways in which nostalgia has been institutionalised in Western societies' (Tannock, 1995: 459).

The ability of nostalgia as a concept to historically locate relationships with the past means that it is an invaluable tool in investigating the way in which various media and cultural institutions construct the past according to the imperatives of modernity and late modernity, not as a static, isolated system of representation but as part of a wider temporal orientation whose characteristics are historically grounded and subject to change over time. Nostalgia is a term that enables the relationship between past and present to be conceived of as fragile and corruptible, inherently dependent on how the resources of the past are made available, how those traces of what has been are mediated and circulated, and how they are employed and deployed in the development of a relationship between past and present. The acknowledgement of what is involved in creating and sustaining a relationship between past and present makes it possible for us to conceptualise nostalgia as a critical tool and distinguish between positive, productive, active uses of the past and those which are sterile, impotent, non-transactional. The critical use of nostalgia has been centrally concerned with the emergence of a new way of relating to the past in modernity that has generally, for various reasons, been considered regressive. In light of the reconsideration nostalgia has been given here, it can, and should be, considered equally as progressive in both its vernacular and media forms.

Chapter 4

The Mnemonic Imagination

> We imagine that we remember things as they were, while in fact all we carry into the future are fragments which reconstruct a wholly illusory past. The first death we witness will always be a murmur of voices down a corridor and a clock falling silent in the darkened room, the end of love is forever two cigarettes in a saucer and a white door closing.
>
> John Banville (1973: 4)

Introduction

As the previous chapter outlined, nostalgia can take various forms in the present. The same past can be brought into being in both progressive and conservative ways, across a range of varying connotations and alternative meanings. Where these accounts are realised through communication and representation, they are not fixed, but subject to continual change and endless revision. In this sense, there is no objective account of the past. But how is this endless play with meaning possible without the radical loss of historicity? How is the past able to take on so many meanings and forms given its roots in lived experience? These are the questions which this chapter seeks to investigate. It does so by reconsidering traditional binary distinctions between memory and imagination, and exploring imagination as a potential motor for memory.

When we remember we do not simply recall the past-as-it-was-experienced. There is no direct relay of past events and situations. There is no direct recreation of those events and situations in their full amplitude of experience within a vanished present. To assume this of memory is naïve and misleading. This may seem obvious, but commonly enough we prefer to accept the illusion of regaining the past as it was, of using our memories as a means of calling back into the present actual passages and segments of the past. We imagine that we remember things as they were.

This use of our imaginary powers, which convinces us of the illusion of regaining the past, at least when it serves our immediate purposes, is not devalued or played down, and in this respect contrasts markedly with the negative comparison which imagination is made to have when set against memory. We may say to someone, for example, that they are imagining things when they tell of something they remember. This is a way of casting doubt on the veracity of their memory or belittling the extent to which a memory fragment has been elaborated and made to seem more vivid or more startling or more profuse than can actually

be the case. Imagination then is certainly devalued, its currency considered base when compared with the powers of memory unmediated by any other faculty. We then regard imagination as having its place, but of being out of place when it works upon memories and falsifies them, or at least distorts them and reduces their reliability. This is, for us, a false dichotomy, yet distinguishing mental capacities for apprehending what is absent on the basis of this dichotomy remains a commonplace judgement.

The result is a polarisation of imagination and memory. If we are to move towards a more coherent and sensitive account of the ways in which the human subject engages with the past, these ways of thinking and knowing must be reconciled so as to allow remembering to be seen, not as a consideration of the past as a temporal arena devoid of potential, but one that is intimately connected to what might have been, or what is yet to be, as well as with what was. Memory can then be seen as existing in fruitful conjunction with the imagination, and imagination itself seen as the way we piece together the fragments of the past into a relatively coherent narrative. When imagination fertilises memory it may also helps us avoid associating what we remember with the stock images and sentimental clichés of murmurs down corridors, dog-ends in a saucer, clocks suddenly stopping and white doors closing.

The most damaging consequence of any sharp division between memory and imagination occurs when the opposed values of truth and falsity are mapped onto them. A memory, voluntary or involuntary, shines forth in the brilliance of its veracity, which can then only be tarnished when imagination sallies forth. Imagination produces exaggeration, embellishment, ornamentation; it distorts and creates untruth or deviations from the truth; it devalues the currency of memory and turns accurate recall into suspect accounting. Memory outweighs imagination in being invested with positivist notions of accuracy and veracity. It can be drawn on by sociologists and social historians even though its evidence may need to be checked against other sources. Imagination by contrast is associated with poets, artists, dreamers. It is regarded as moving in the opposite direction to memory. The separation of these modes of interpretation, evaluation and understanding is based on assumptions of their underlying incompatibility, as in the broader gulf that grew in the nineteenth century between positivism and romanticism. Such assumptions still rely on the sense of that distance even though the values of truth and falsity it supports have been thoroughly critiqued. It is time for memory and imagination to be seen not as enemies, but reunited as friends. They are certainly distinct in what they bring to their relationship, but their distinctions are precisely what make them not only as compatible, but also necessary for each other. The past exists in fragments and is reconstructed through imagination. An illusory sense of the past is constructed only when imagination is irrevocably set off against memory. We need to

reconceptualise their relation in terms of mutuality and what they productively bring to each other. That is the purpose of the concept of the mnemonic imagination.

Historical Divisions

In distinguishing conceptually between memory and imagination, attention in the human sciences has, among other things, focused on attempts to ascertain how we are able to differentiate between 'what has been' and that of which we have no experiential knowledge. This obviously becomes more complicated as soon as we take into account any secondary source of empirical data, whether this is a television documentary, a photograph, an autobiography or even a childhood story told by one of your grandparents. There can be no neat or fixed division between fact and fiction any more than there can between memory and imagination, though that of course is not the same as saying that distinctions between them are unimportant. Such considerations cannot simply be corralled as a matter of evidence and procedure, for the separation of imagination and memory occurred also because of how the temporal rupture between modern societies and their predecessors was conceived, in classical sociology and anthropology, with progress and preservation seen as competing against each other, and the desire for change conflicting with the profound sense of unease of times being out of joint, and time itself accelerating out of human control. Under the flag of progress, the past became the conceptual other of onward development, negatively tied to backwardness and sterility. Narratives of linear advance became dominant and favoured future-oriented thought. The desire to create the present and future was accompanied by a desire to leave the past behind.

Initially, imagination was the target of virulent critique by Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke and Hume. They considered it the very antithesis of rational thought and knowledge. It was Kant who sought a rapprochement of rationality and the imagination in his development of the transcendental imagination as a component of reason (Kemp Smith, 1933). Unsurprisingly, throughout modernity imagination in its forward-facing orientation was a faculty that rose in importance in critical and philosophical accounts, not least in connection with the romantic notion of genius. Its associations with creation and the future, with newness and potentiality, stood as surety for its value in the post-Enlightenment period. Kearney (1994: 155) notes that, in modernity, the concept of imagination underwent a paradigmatic shift from a mimetic to a productive capacity, signalling a break with the belief in a truth beyond human comprehension. Imagination became associated with the generation of new knowledge or regarded as its own source of knowledge. Imagination as the locus of human creativity is a result of the secularisation of modern culture. This established

imagination as a faculty of the human mind rather than as an external property of the divine. Imagination became understood as an individual power or attribute in line with the modernist cult of the individual and the associated ideal of self-determination (Negus and Pickering, 2004: 1-9). Subsequently, both romanticism and modernism, in many ways in a direct line of aesthetic descent, conceived of the free play of the imagination in opposition to the cold clinical nature of rationalised or technocratic knowledge.

Emphasis on the role of imagination as a faculty capable of generating knowledge was directly related to the positioning of memory. Mary Warnock (1987 and 1994) traces modernist philosophical forays into the field of memory and imagination and their attempts to explore the relations between them, starting with philosophers who have proposed image-based theories of memory and imagination. Hobbes suggested that 'fancy and memory differ only in this, that memory supposeth time past and imagination does not' (Hobbes cited in Warnock, 1987: 18), implying that memory and imagination are the same in the forms they take and our experience of them, differing only in their temporal orientation. The shared form is that of the mental image as this is conjured forth by both imagination and memory. Attention to the two faculties then became concerned with the ways in which the mind is able to distinguish between these two differently oriented images. Warnock details Hume's suggestion that 'the degree of force and liveliness' of the memory-image over against the imagination-image is the distinguishing feature, since memory, in its direct and causal relation to experience, is more potent than imagination. The limitations of this proposal and other value-judgements of this kind become clear when compared with Hobbes's distinction based on similar criteria, but leading to the opposite conclusion – that imagination is of superior 'force' to memory since memory images are 'worn out with time' (Hobbes cited in Warnock, 1987: 19). In this way the basis of their polarisation began to be set out.

The project of ascertaining the nature of memory through the process of differentiating it from imagination did not end with the imagists. Wittgenstein (1958), for example, suggested that memory is a form of knowledge solely about the past rather than the future. In relation to this, Warnock makes the analogy that, as with pain, we feel its location in experiencing it; so with memory, for in experiencing it we necessarily interpret its pastness (Warnock, 1987: 27). This would necessarily suggest that imagination is qualitatively different from memory insofar as it refers to a different temporal field, that of a potential future. Sartre, in *The Psychology of Imagination* (1972), advances the distinction between imagination and memory as one which is less concerned with the temporal 'feeling' of memory than to a distinction between the real and the unreal. Sartre claims that in the act of imagining any given thing '*I present them to myself*, in themselves. But at that moment that

ceases to conceive them as continuous present in order to grasp them in themselves, I grasp them as *absent'*. In contrast, if 'I recall an incident of my past life, I do not imagine it, I *recall* it. That is, I do not posit it as *given-in-its-absence* but as *given-now-as-in-the-past* (p.210, emphasis in original). Sartre therefore suggests that memory is constrained by reality and imagination is not. This is a suggestion that Warnock accepts, suggesting that although we can confuse the imagined 'nothingness' with the 'retired reality' of memory they are, in fact, quite different (Warnock, 1987: 35).

The preoccupation of philosophy in characterising the differences between imagination and memory has led to a neglect of their similarities and complementarities. Although Sartre recognised their similar orientations in that they both attend to what is absent, other significant points have been missed. Perhaps most importantly is their relationship to temporality. Imagination and memory are both orientated to temporal spheres other than the present, but not in any simplistic division between past and future. We can imagine how things could be in the future, or how they have been in the past, while remembering how things were brings them back in some way into the present and so, potentially at least, into the future. Neither faculty belongs necessarily in any specific temporal field, as if in some natural habitat. This is because, although obviously in different ways, they are both concerned with the generation of meaning, with making sense of the world and our relationship to it, in varying temporal associations. They can be directed inward to the self, as in the private reverie or fantasy, or communicated outward in social interactions, as in situations of co-presence or in forms of communications across time and space, ranging from a letter to a friend to an internationally disseminated autobiography. When discussed in these terms, it seems surprising to say the least that their mutuality has gone unnoticed and so far largely untheorised.

Re-conceptualising imagination and memory in view of one another is a necessary and timely intervention for both memory studies and media studies. This needs to be undertaken in connection with the temporal disjunctions that characterise modernity and late modernity. Temporal acceleration, a rationalised relationship to time, and an increasing remoteness of the past coexist with an increasing emphasis on touchstones of memory, from historical photographs to the expansion of museums. With the profusion of mnemonic technologies and a culture of continuingly increasing velocity, perceived temporal disjunction is set to deepen. In response to this, one aspect of rethinking memory and imagination is a reopening of dialogue between the tenses of time as these inform the grammar of historical movement and change.

In conjoining memory and imagination, a move can be made towards evaluating our temporal experience on the basis of what it provides for us in terms of personal and cultural resources for facilitating transformation, and understanding temporal disunities and loss. This is also pertinent to relations between the unmooring of memories and the past from their experiential contexts and contextual moorings in the contemporary mass media landscape where the past circulates widely in commodity form. If we are to provide an alternative account of the semantic possibilities of freely circulating references to the past other than the radical loss of meaning as proposed by postmodernist theorists, we need to insist on the role of imagination in reactivating the historical text. By recognising the radical role of imagination in creating new narratives from disparate media resources, the ability of the imagination in energising our readings of past-oriented texts, and resituating the self in relation to the past, may produce new ways of making historical meaning.

The Damage of Separation

The fundamental distinction between memory and imagination in the experience of time in everyday life has not been without consequence. The characterisation of imagination as a way of thinking unconcerned with reality, and memory as oriented only to an experienced reality, limits and constricts the ways in which we can think about our relationships with different temporal spheres. For example, fantasies of the future may be couched in the imagery of the past, while memories may be a fertilising ingredient of fantasy. Experience that has long since been enacted, can, via remembering, be interwoven with playful imaginings of what might-have-been or what is still to come. The transactional value of these instances in the present cannot be adequately grasped where a rigid separation of past and present is instituted or maintained. The conceptualisation of memory in the entrenched terms of truth, falsity and the 'real' fixes the temporal orientation of communication of, and about, the past. It is restricted only to determining what has been, rather than connecting with and being constitutive of what might have been, or what might come to be. When imaginative speculation is denied to remembering, the past cannot be understood as a resource for potential transformation, inspiration or change. To tie remembering exclusively to once-lived experience is to radically underestimate the ways in which we think in and of the past in the present and the constitutive role this has in orienting a sense of self within particular social and cultural frameworks.

Alongside these theoretical concerns, sharp divisions between memory and imagination have resounded in contemporary gender politics. In her book, *Relational Remembering*, Sue Campbell (2003) illustrates what is at stake in the distinction and separation of imagined fantasy and remembered reality. The furore over recovered memory

and false memory syndrome, particularly in the United States in relation to child abuse cases, has framed debates over the relationship between imagination and memory as a war between fact and fiction. Instead, meaning is the ultimate casualty. Displacement of 'significant social and political dimensions [of the debate surrounding women's sexual abuse in childhood] to successful remembering' (p. 17) have resulted in a preoccupation with defining fact from fiction in individual cases rather than considering the wider issues of gender and sexuality surrounding women's self-identification, regardless of actual events, as victims of abuse by male authority figures in their childhood. The use of imagination in reconstructing gendered trauma is not considered a legitimate mode of exploration and stories not conforming to the cultural template of recall are discounted as literally *meaning-less*. The stringent parameters of the debate and neglect of imagination as necessary to remembering have limited the potential to rethink women's relationship to their pasts and to familial structures, denying the possibility of change and transformation in their everyday contexts of experience.

The prohibitions of this distinction reach the domain of cultural production and criticism, limiting its capacity to deal effectively with the politics of representation. Memory is prized over imagination in the search for historical truths via its presumed association with a past reality, suggesting that it stakes the most fundamental and unchallengeable claim on the meaning of the past. This legitimises some voices and silences others, and inevitably sanctions the voice of the immediate witness above all others. This is perhaps most markedly seen in the criticism of representations of the Holocaust, particularly in the comparative analyses of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1994). In contrast to *Shoah*, which was made up of the testimony of sanctioned witnesses with apparently minimal recourse to imagination, *Schindler's List* was frequently criticised for its imaginative, fictionalised rendering of the Holocaust. This deflected attention from the ways in which it productively challenged the debate in contemporary society regarding the memorialisation of the Holocaust (McNab, 2005, and see Hansen, 1996 for further consideration of *Shoah* and *Schindler's List* as Holocaust representations) and the role it has played in generating new ways of understanding those events from its very specific temporal as well as cultural perspective.

Imagination should be seen as vital to the development and re-working of historically contingent meaning. As Ricouer (1994) suggests, imagination is semantically innovative and therefore productive (p.121-3), providing the means by which to generate new meaning, the how if we wish to have a contingent and dynamic account of the past brought forth through memory that is able to respond to the shifting present and our orientation to the future, can we

deny the role of imagination in its creation? Of course this doesn't mean that imagination and memory should be seen as one and the same. It is undeniable that distinctions exist and that they are crucial (Warnock, 1987: 16). Memory does have a link with a personal or collective sense of the past and imagination is not in all cases centrally concerned with the past, or imbued with a qualitative sense of pastness and past life. What is being argued is that a polarisation of these two concepts is sociologically unproductive. It closes down meaning and serves to further conceptually distance past and present, which are at their most productive when in active dialogue with one another. It is always under these communicative conditions that the potential for change is realised.

Contested Boundaries

Sustaining the polarisation of memory and imagination becomes difficult when examining more closely the ways in which we encounter and make sense of the past in our everyday lives. In the private domain of the self, the personal reverie presents one of the first challenges to this separation. The description of one such experience by Annette Kuhn (2002: 135) makes clear that memory and imagination are simultaneously at work, and are indivisible in their conscious enactment:

> *As I tread the pavement outside the British Museum's main entrance in Great Russell Street, I am caught up in a reverie: a view from below of the trees, light filtering down through the leaves. This transports me out of body, out of time; and is so intensely pleasurable an experience that I often call it up when I am in that particular place. The trees of my reverie are city trees, plane trees probably, like the ones that in actuality line Great Russell Street. But they are not so mature as the real ones. The shade they cast is less dense. And while the British Museum is not actually there in my reverie, a building that I know for certain to be the museum seems to be present, but out of frame. Although no such scene appears in the film, this experience is unequivocally associated for me with 'Listen to Britain'; in particular with some bars from Mozart's Piano Concerto in G Major, the piece played by Myra Hess in the National Gallery sequence.*

The recollection of an experience of walking down a particular street is evoked by its bodily re-enactment, yet the mnemonic experience is amplified by the operation of imagination; the trees are less shaded, the museum is simultaneously present and absent, there is a filmic quality and particular musical associations all of which extend far beyond the bounds of recalled experience. Collective memory is infused with the personal dimension of the reverie by the conjuring of a particular segment from Jennings's film which seeks historically to represent Britain and its multiply formed national culture. The intensity of the experience is directly related to how the layered associations interwoven with the memory are enabled by

her imagination; its bodily enactment transcends the boundaries between past and present, creating a subject position which is strictly situated in neither tense. Memory and imagination work in tandem, creating an experience so intense as to be experienced consciously, bodily and reflexively. To isolate these two complementary faculties in this context would be to deny their cumulative effect.

The dichotomy that has been constructed between imagination and memory is not only contestable with respect to private reflection, but is also difficult to apply in many spheres of intellectual work and cultural representation. Recognition of this is of great importance for understanding how the past is experienced in the present, for individual, personal remembering is different from, yet inextricably connected to, the ways in which the past is communicated and represented in a public or collective context. Autobiography and biography as literary genres have always been contested spaces for this distinction. There, the line cannot be drawn. As Warnock (1987) suggests, 'to create a story, both memory and imagination must be deployed, and autobiography is the place where, more than any other, their functions overlap' (p.126). The past is retold through the lens of the present and read through the reader's subjective position, making the narrative representation of the past, even though authorial claims of veracity and facticity are made, a matter for imaginative interpretation by both author and reader.

The narrative form of communication embodied in the autobiography necessitates the closing of gaps in accounts of the past and the ascription of meaning to experience. In so doing it necessarily oscillates between individual and collective pasts, creatively integrating individual actions with ethnic, class or gendered experiences in order to make an individual's life understandable and communicable to others. The claims to 'truth' made in life stories are not those of independently verifiable fact. As Nicola King (2000) discusses in her analysis of Sylvia Fraser's autobiographical work *My Father's House,* which presents an account of abuse by her father, the 'truth' that can be claimed in autobiography is one which refers to the sense and meaning made of events rather than events as they actually were (pp. 67-8). This deliberate embrace of the role of the imagination in creating a narrative of ones past is self-consciously recognised by Carolyn Steedman (1986) in her autobiography, *Landscape for a Good Woman,* as she suggests that she is constructing and continually reinterpreting a landscape rather than revisiting one that exists unchanged over time (p.128). The act of writing the story of herself is essentially a creative one, as well as being derived from memory. The nature of representing the past either through words or text necessarily involves the reworking of the past from a thought or idea into a new form. Recognition of the inability to resurrect the past *as-it-was* through a communicative event demands that memory and

imagination are reconciled as complementary modes of formulating a version of the past which has meaning and is capable of attaining communicative value.

Documentary film is another genre where the strict division of memory and imagination becomes complex. Such film makes claims on temporal truths but in its production and consumption, meanings are made and remade in the delicate balance between memory and imagination. The use of original footage may seem to masquerade as 'pure' memory and deny the need for interpretation, yet in actuality it demands of the viewer imaginative leaps of empathy, sympathy and identification. What would be seen through the eyes of the soldier in the mud-drenched uniform? What is he thinking in that fleeting glance into the camera? What smells might have mingled with the explosive charges? What happened to him subsequently? Did he live on, or miserably die? These imaginative movements are marshalled by the imaginative labour of the producer; the solemn music is intended as suggestive of a last stand, while the cut to tranquil skies signals thoughts of peace, freedom or the return home. It is not only the play of personal memory and imagination that is brought to bear in the operation of cultural texts which make claims on the past. Imagined notions of shared cultural identity also intersect with existing collective memories. A sense of national identity and existing knowledge of national history may be creatively drawn on and utilised in the reading of a historical cultural text, creating new narratives of the past. Alongside this, the fusing of an imagined sense of collective identity with the mnemonic work of remembering creates durable frameworks of meaning useable in the present and future.

Bringing memory and imagination together again is not a novel proposal, for as Harpur (2002: 212) claims in writing about Coleridge and Proust, 'the relationship between recollection and imagination is so richly interfused that it is difficult to separate them'. In popular, as in literary culture, the idea of blurring the boundaries between memory and imagination has held considerable appeal, as for example is suggested by the theme of the *Back to the Future* film series where the past literally becomes a tangible site for experimentation with future potentialities. But besides flagging up the need to contest the memory/imagination binary, we need to attend to the specific ways in which memory and imagination act in joint operation. Identifying precisely what counts as exemplifying their mutual operation is central to this. They do not act or interact in the same ways in all contexts, for they can each be drawn on in varying degrees. What has been termed habit-memory or bodily memory has little to do with imagination. Remembering how to ride a bike or tie a reef knot relies little on imaginative work. Imagination can equally operate outside the arena of remembering in a variety of ways, such as fantasising about future achievements or of experiences yet to be had. The circumstances dealt with here involve the experience of

remembering being directed towards something new or different by the imagination, and the creative capacities of imagination being oriented to the past by the operation of memory. The term we use for this creative way of relating to the past is the mnemonic imagination.

The Mnemonic Imagination

Mnemonic imagination is concerned with those instances of conscious thought which draw on the past but go beyond the recollection of an experienced event to connect with new possibilities or conceptions in the present and future. It enables the past to transcend its existence as a lived reality and become fluid in its semantic possibilities, resituating it as a site and resource of creativity rather than one whose meaning is predetermined or fixed, whether as implacable fact or as stock images and sentimental clichés. A small example: in recalling a defining moment in a personal relationship, you may recall a conversation that took place and position it in a direct, causal relation to the current state of that relationship. Alternatively, using your imagination, you may try out different approaches to the same conversation along the lines of 'if I had said this, then maybe a different result would have been achieved' and so forth. The past is not only a site of hard-and-fast meaning, but one of contingent and flexible opportunities to be creative, trying out various ways to reconnect past, present and future, perhaps motivating or stimulating action in the present or future, or perhaps not.

What is significant here is the past as a site not only of multiple meaning but also of the exploration of these meanings which have potential consequences in lived action. The activation of imagination in remembering if it is to take on a discernible progressive role in the present has been noted by others. For example, Harpur suggests that the past 'can only take on reality in the present by a creative act of imagination' (2002: 224). We do not advocate wholesale acceptance of the sweeping claim that meaning is only found at the juncture of imagination and memory, but it can certainly be suggested that if we take Harpur's notion of 'reality' to mean that the past has some transactional and transformative value in the present, imagination is central in activating this potential.

The mnemonic imagination is centrally involved in how the past is made to make communicative sense, how it is articulated in cultural texts and how any creative rethinking of the past is realised or temporal fixities are undermined. It provides an important antidote to the common modern perception and characterisation of the past as a semantic cul-de-sac. Alison Landsberg (2004) explores this in her analysis of the film *Strange Days,* where its use of memory has been 'condemned for its solipsistic nature' and is characterised as a 'retreat from the "real world"' (p.141). In specific social contexts the past can be invoked in

imaginative ways in the interests of sustaining or developing existing networks of relations. For example, family stories which animate key moments in a shared past are exercises not only in memory but in imagination; gaps in narratives are filled with embellished detail and retrospective meanings are inscribed making the ongoing narrative a hybrid of memory and fantasy. Without the mnemonic imagination, any text which represents the past would have little more cultural resonance than philately or horse-brass collecting.

Developing the mnemonic imagination as a concept holds the potential to transcend the boundaries that excessively mark the distinctions between personal, social and cultural forms of remembering. Personal memory has largely become the investigative domain of philosophers and psychologists, while sociologists have concerned themselves with collective memory and media and cultural studies with cultural forms of memory. Although undoubtedly providing vital insights in their own right, there is a clear danger of their becoming conceptually disconnected from each other rather than viewed as different aspects of the late-modern temporal experience. We need to see these different forms of memory as different aspects of late modern temporal experience in the round. The mnemonic imagination is a way of making sense of the past as it features in all these areas of remembering and so bringing them into view of one another in the interests of a more holistic approach to the consideration of contemporary temporal experience.

It is important to recognise that the enactment of mnemonic imagination either individually, or in various socio-cultural contexts, is not simply free or unbounded. It is always conducted within a framework of social norms and conventions which marshal the ways in which we are able to think about the past. Anyone considering the possibilities open to them in the future given the choices they have made, or might have made in the past, will do so in a complex web of intersecting gendered and generational discourses, or class and ethnic templates, operating at the point of the memory work being enacted. Those which operated historically also inform understandings of lived experience, their own or that of others. Similarly, in the production and consumption of cultural texts which creatively re-work the past, conventions of representation continue to be drawn on in making sense of the past. This is not to suggest that there are set-in-stone parameters or limits to the meanings generated by temporal thought or communicative action but rather that the conceptual integration of imagination into the processes of remembering doesn't mitigate their influence.

Nor should we think of the influence of tradition on the mnemonic imagination in terms of a dichotomy of invention and authenticity, for this would be to associate imagination with pejorative uses of the term invention and elevate mythical notions of authenticity over

and above any understanding of why recently constructed traditions gain popular appeal as well as serving political interests. Invented traditions or others of greater longevity are equally bound up with the forces of modernity and its contradictory orientations to the past. Their popular appeal is always implicated in the relations between micro- and macro-cultural worlds (see Negus and Pickering, 2004: 91-114). In light of this the potential that mnemonic imagination provides should not be seen as one of pure creation or invention, but one of transformation, hybridisation and the re-working of various resources to generate new meanings in the context of an existing cultural framework.

A key dimension of mnemonic imagination in enlivening the past is its ability to respond to changed presents. Reconciling what has been, what is and what might be makes imagination fundamentally necessary to remembering in some cases as its flexibility with regard to the construction of meaning enables continuities to be created, re-worked and thereby sustained across time. This can take many forms. A continuous, if shifting sense of self can be maintained over a lifespan, and can tolerate and assimilate upheavals and challenges without compromising a holistic and enduring sense of identity. Conceptions of national identity can be maintained in the cultural public sphere through a creative reworking of the past in relation to rapidly changing times by legitimating particular boundaries between 'us' and 'them', whether this involves commemorative ceremonies, television drama or seemingly trivial everyday uses of language.

This flexibility necessitates a move beyond Sartre's distinction between the real and the unreal as the primary orientations of memory and imagination in so far as the experienced past is intimately connected with what might be or might have been, bringing together the actual and the potential. It negates any rigid separation of past, present and future, favouring a conception of temporal experience as interpretively mobile and able to move imaginatively between different tenses, as for instance when we're intensely moved by an old photograph or item of popular music from the past, as was discussed in chapter two. Although there are undoubtedly mnemonic experiences which are felt as radically disconnected from the present or future, a temporal model of remembering which is not characterised by dissociation is vital if we're to regard remembering as potentially incorporating the consideration of past and future in such a way that provides meaning or holds explanatory power in the present.

Psychic Sensations and Everyday Enactments

The mnemonic imagination is actively creative rather than purely reflective. Its multi-temporal orientation always has particular implications for the ways in which it is

experienced. As it is inherently concerned with the potential of the past in relation to the present and future, the memory with which it is concerned is likely to be experienced as salient to the self which undertakes the action, creating an intense sense of continuity of self-now and self-in-the-past, rather than a sense of disconnection across past, present and future. Rather than being immersed in a conventional sense of durational time and distance across time, our experience of the remembered past seems to dilate and constrict in relation to our response to it, generating a psychic, even bodily sensation of 'being back there' despite being a re-imagined interpretation of the reality as it was experienced. The imaginative action enables a rush of connection to be felt across time, condensed in the moment of imaginatively remembering.

This highlights the importance of the dual action of memory and imagination in the reflexive project of developing a sense of selfhood, one that adapts and changes while maintaining a grasp of its narrative threads through time. The personal and private experience of mnemonic imagination is a very specific form of mnemonic action and only occurs in particular circumstances. It may occur where conditions in the present markedly diverge from those of the past in order to make sense of these changed circumstances. For example, where someone's relationship with a family member in the present is so radically different from that which obtained in the past, new imaginative work is required to build coherent links between past and present which will provide the framework or trajectory for that relationship to continue in the future. The action of memory is performed in light of the imaginative constructions of what may come to exist or what might have existed. In this sense, the mnemonic imagination mobilises the past, present and future into dialogic relations with one another by opening the interstitial space between temporalities and utilising it as a site of speculation, creation and reinvention.

A key role of mnemonic imagination is the experimental role it plays in fostering relations between temporal dimensions. The role of imagination lets the remembering agent play with the resources of memory, provisionally constructing narratives that can be reformed in line with the demands of the present. In this sense it is entirely compatible with cultural creativity itself when it 'works with the materials given to it by experience in order to make something more 'true' than the experience itself' (Negus and Pickering, 2004: 34). This flexibility and utility in generating a temporalised sense of self should not be misconstrued as an uncritical celebration of popular notions of unfettered self-determination. Re-imagining is necessarily constricted by ideological codes of representation and meaning, of both the past and present. Nor should this be seen as producing solely internal self-oriented resources; the

tangible products and uses of mnemonic imagination can be seen in social interactions and in processes of cultural production and consumption.

Mnemonic imagination is further enabled by common mnemonic technologies such as photography and phonography in the ways they are put to use in everyday life. Deliberate and ritualistic uses of technologies in the construction of personal, familial and collective narratives position them as one of our primary modes of making sense of our pasts, particularly but not exclusively in a domestic context. Their capacities to invite and articulate mnemonic imagination and its attendant relations between past and present are dependent on their various formal properties and the temporal frameworks they provide.

Photography as a commonly used everyday technology of memory is inevitably concerned with providing an arena for the enactment of mnemonic imagination. The viewing of an image of time past can act as a portal into a complex web of meanings. For example, Barthes's (1984) experience of viewing the image of his mother as a child was as much concerned with his fantasies of his mother as she might have been as it was with his experientially derived memories of her. Specific to the photographic image is a particular relationship between the referent and its representation: the critically dubious yet ever-potent invocation of Barthes's '*ça a été*'. However creative the fantasy of the past and its relation to the present or future, the force associated with affirming a past referent's material existence lends an aura of authenticity or truth, rupturing any slide into pure fantasy with the perception of an undeniable past existence. However, the intimate link between representation and referent may also be responsible for closing down the play of mnemonic imagination. Where the stringently determined referent of the image is radically divergent from the conditions of the present, an imaginative reconciliation of the past and present or future in a meaningful continuous narrative may be prohibited, perhaps leading to disillusionment with the present or a rejection of the photographic text. The smiling family portrait may be so incongruous with subsequent events or disclosures, or with present family tensions, that imaginative creativity is unable to overcome the temporal disconnection.

Phonography, in its less determinate relationship with past experience, is more flexible in the imagining it permits. How a particular song was heard or sung is not inscribed in the text or tune since it is only realised in the ear of the listener or performer. Recorded music as a mnemonic technology provides a greater flexibility than photography in its accommodation of imagination in the meaning-making process. In the phonographic text there is no 'past self' explicitly encoded within it which would, as with photography, necessarily be put into a contrasting relation with the remembering self in the present, yet

phonography still allows the remembering-self to be unified with the self-in-the-memory, allowing a sensation of re-experience which can be intensely powerful. Listening to a piece of music from high school might not only lead you to imagine what would have happened had you married your childhood sweetheart, but to imagine that you really could, or would, have done, creatively constructing a life that you might have had, overlaid with the re-invoked sensation of excitement felt on that first date. The photographic image of your childhood sweetheart would force you to see them in relation to your contemporary self, making explicit their pimples, braces and dated hair-style which in your phonographically imagined reverie went entirely unnoticed.

This is not to suggest that the record has no material connection to the past, for it can clearly elicit a compelling sense of a past reality, but this is not inscribed in the text itself. The quality provided by the photograph and phonograph record as material traces of time is proportionate to the intensity of feeling and value invested in it. We may inherit a parent's photograph collection, but it will not mean quite so much to us as our own, and a grandparent's will mean even less; that of a stranger would interest us only for period detail and the like. The same applies to inherited record collections, but even more so. The aural or visual punctum is, however, always unexpected and unpredictable. Barthes rediscovered his mother after her death in a photograph of her when she was five years old, in 1898. This was long before his own birth. In that image was prefigured a quality she maintained all her life – 'the assertion of a gentleness'. The quality was key to her maternal reality for Barthes, but that image would be ordinary for anyone else (1984: 69). At a funeral, people play the favourite songs or pieces of music of a deceased relative for the reason, and with the same hope of intimate temporal interconnectedness. They do this in defiance of finitude and human fate.

Mnemonic Imagination and Historical Value

We have tried to establish two major points about mnemonic imagination: first, that imagination is central to the activation of memory and memory's potential in the present; and second, that memory's assimilation of the transformative potential of imagination has clear consequences for the way we assess the cultural value of the past-in-the-present. The ability to generate new meaning immediately raises the possibility of the past as a politically progressive resource. This is not a completely new claim made on behalf of memory. In her discussion of 'prosthetic memories', Landsberg (2004) argues that 'it is possible to imagine a relationship to memory that forges rather than impedes the formation of progressive political alliances and solidarities' (p.143). Mnemonic imagination offers the possibility of this

relationship, making thinking about the past revelatory and constructive. It can provide a source for new ways of thinking about the world and prevent the past tense always signifying a regressive antithesis to progress. Recourse to the past is only regressive where the relation between past and present is conceived as one of distance and dislocation, as in early modernity (see McQuire, 1998: 121-6).

Imagination transforms memory into a site of exploration and experimentation and so can challenge versions of the past or of pastness that have become entrenched or outworn. Particular accounts of the past only retain their semantic relevance by virtue of a productive or meaningful relationship with the present, meaning that they are always provisional and subject to change and revision. Imagination then provides a way of reformulating those narratives, making sure they always make sense from the perspective of the present. This process can be constantly seen at work both in popular culture and social life. In terms of collective memory, imagination has been central to rethinking concepts of a British national identity in light of increasingly established multiculturalism and new family structures. In popular culture and social life we use our imagination to experiment with new formulations and accounts of national identity, which position ethnicity, religion and sexuality in new and novel relationships to citizenship, which can seen in interpersonal communication right through to political rhetoric (for example see Kearney, 2005).

A second point that Landsberg (2004) makes that is of central relevance to the political potential of mnemonic imagination is in direct opposition to Warnock's (1987) assertion that 'we do not, as a rule, learn from other people's pasts; it is hard enough to learn from our own' (p.121). Landsberg suggests that communication about the past, either interpersonally or culturally, can allow the possibility of the listener or viewer to inhabit and experiment with alternative subject positions and therefore empathise with the experience of others. Imagination is central in this as it allows experiences and subject positions to be encoded in cultural texts and in interpersonal communication. It allows these to be understood by viewers, readers or listeners. An imaginative response is indispensable if we're to go beyond listening to an account of another's past experience and develop some sense of what the experience may have been like at that time. Empathy can only ever be partial, but striving for it 'enables people to see and act differently' (Landsberg, 2004: 150). This is one of the grounding conditions for ethical thinking as it is for collective memory.

Of course, mnemonic imagination is not everywhere and for all time progressive or a facilitator of change and renewal in the present. In private remembering, some enactments of mnemonic imagination can become attenuated in their transactional value in the present.

Imagining which idealises a past disconnected from the future or which sentimentally promotes a desire to return to the past rather than use it to enrich experience in the present bear many similarities to the traditional melancholic characterisation of nostalgia, and run counter to more progressive uses of nostalgia that were discussed in the previous chapter. So the mnemonic imagination cannot be assigned any inherently progressive role in the relations forged between past, present and future. It can only be progressive in its textual forms where its status as representation is recognised and reflexively drawn upon so that the play between imagination and memory is maintained and fostered rather than allowed to become fixed and closed down. Only where it provides resources for transformation in the present can it be seen as fostering progressive relations between past and present. This self-conscious recognition of contingency and utility is allied to the importance of evaluating instances of mnemonic imagination on their contextual merits.

Huyssen (2000) argues a similar case in his discussion of memories in their mediated forms. He suggests that memory in commodity form does not necessarily involve the banalisation of the memory as a historical event. Instead, we should attend to the 'specific strategies of representation ... and the contexts in which they are staged' (p.29) in order to ascertain the progressive possibilities of memory in their mediated forms. In this regard, the value of mnemonic imagination cannot be judged purely on its epistemological form but requires an assessment of the specific uses to which it is put. This applies both to meanings encoded in cultural texts referring to the past and to their situated reception, as the transformative potential of any one representation of the past is contingent on its historical context and that of readers and the meanings they are able to make from the texts they engage with. Evaluation may then focus on the transactional value which is provided and realised through the action of imagination on remembering. Those mnemonic imaginings which reassess the relationship of the past to the present in the interests of future action can be interpreted as progressive, while those which orient themselves solely to the past or inhibit action in the present can be understood as regressive and melancholic.

Mnemonic imagination enables a creative dimension to be added to remembering which is essential to the maintenance of the historical contingency of remembering. As Ricoeur (1994) suggests, "the possibility of historical experience in general lies in our ability to remain open to the effects of history ... We are affected by the effects of history, however, only to the extent that we are able to increase our capacity to be affected in this way. The imagination is the secret of this competence" (p.129). Time's traces are consciously remembered for the quality of imagination that is brought to bear on them, for otherwise they

exist only as fragments of the past on which the clock does fall silent and doors remain forever closed.

Chapter 5
The Social Dynamics of Memory

Introduction

The past does not operate in the present independently, neutrally or of its own accord. It is performed by human subjects: cognitively, through the convergence of memory and imagination, and practically in social and cultural contexts, constituted in our systems of representation and realised in our consciousness. It is engaged with in the everyday activities of contemporary life and cannot be abstracted from its contexts of enactment. The measure of mnemonic labour is not the accuracy of recall, which perpetuates the myth of a neutral past that can be summoned at will, against which we can test the faithfulness of our memories. Instead, remembering should be evaluated in the holistic sense in which it exists in our lives, as a system of making temporalised meaning, meaning that is informed by temporal reference and value.

This way of articulating the past in the present, enacted and embodied in our everyday existence, is manifested in a plethora of forms ranging from the most intimately personal moments of reflection to the viewing of a period television drama. The undertaking of these various activities cannot be separated from other systems of understanding and performing our everyday lives in contemporary society. Remembering is marshalled by the ideological and cultural frameworks within which it operates. But beyond this, remembering both constructs and challenges taken-for-granted historical knowledge and temporal meaning activated by our human agency, as individuals and as members of social groups and collectivities.

Memory as part of the fabric of everyday life is poorly conceived in existing writing on memory. The reference here is not to habit memory, such as recalling how to find the bus stop every morning, but to memory in its imaginative activation as one of the central ways we have for making sense of the world and time we live in. The study of memory has become fragmented. Cultural representations of the past have been separated from the social interactions involving remembering, which in turn have been treated as separate to our private orientations to the past. Now is the time to bring together these divergent but interconnected components of temporal awareness and mnemonic work if we wish to make sense of the totality of ways in which we remember in our everyday lives.

In view of this, the ways in which we inhabit our memories, live in them and through them as resources for the creation of meaning, both of our own selves and the social world around us, become of central importance to understanding memory. Questions regarding the form our remembering takes in everyday life must be raised in conjunction with questions about the ways in which various structuring conditions of contemporary society act on our mnemonic abilities. Questions regarding how we are able to use the past in our private lives have to be tempered with an awareness of the limitations or boundaries imposed on our capacity to remember in particular ways and for particular reasons, dependent on the social positions we hold. Conceptualising this complex oscillation between private and public memory is one of the central conceits of this chapter.

Mnemonic Motivations.

In the first instance it is necessary to turn to, and reformulate the elusive question 'why do we remember'? It is a question which, surprisingly, has been historically elided in a large number of studies of memory, although recent moves to tackle this issue head on are being increasingly undertaken (Misztal, 2003: 5). In its simplest form the question has a straightforward answer: we remember in order to ponder on the past in the present. This in itself is an accurate statement, but it does not go far enough. The question we need to address with more clarity is what action does remembering the past achieve in the present and how do we undertake and experience this action in our daily lives? To do this the past must be recognised as active in the present, rather than its recall being an end in itself. The past is deployed for specific reasons and has specific consequences. This mnemonic action must also be seen as contingent, grounded in the existing frameworks of our daily experience, being directed towards and involved in social as well as individual temporal meaning making.

This notion of the past as acting on the present is not new. Social memory studies from the pioneering work of Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory have clearly identified the past as having social consequences in the present in terms of forming and sustaining the coherence of groups and institutions on the premise that shared knowledge of the past and its meanings are cohesive in a social setting. Further than this, he suggests that individual memory is only possible in the context of shared group knowledge, whether it is in a familial context or other key social formations (Connerton, 1989: 36). Halbwachs (1992) himself states that an individual's memory is the 'intersection of collective influences' (p.44). This contributes to an understanding of memory which recognises the social action that recalling the past performs in the present, aiding the organisation of our social and cultural life and endowing us with a meaningful communicative currency out of which we can build social

relationships, group affiliations and consensus. Remembering can never be performed outside of a social context. The remembering agent is always the occupant of a particular social position or role, necessarily shaping their ideas and knowledge about the past. Although social affiliations may be multiple, the action of remembering extends beyond the individual and enters a web of social communication and knowledge, acting on, as well as through, the social world.

However, this alone cannot sufficiently explain why we remember. One of the key problems with Halbwach's conceptualisation of collective memory is his neglect of the relationship between the social and the individual in terms of memory which results in a model of memory strangely distanced from what we would recognise as everyday mnemonic engagements. Fentress and Wickham (1992) suggest that individual action is so radically deferred to the collective will that any sense of individual agency is lost, resulting in a "concept of collective consciousness curiously disconnected from the thought processes of any particular person" (p.x). This disables his model from accounting for subversive memory, active resistance within social formations and the constant process of selection and omission characterising social and cultural representation and accounts of the past. An artificial, static consensus is assumed in Halbwachs work where a rather more contingent and contested coalescence of knowledge exists in lived experience. In addition, Halbwach does not recognise the dynamic and reciprocally constitutive relationship between the social and memory, rather perpetuating the notion of identity as stable and fixed and memory as a secondary function, reflecting the group's sense of itself (Misztal, 2003: 55).

Despite these difficulties, the notion that motivations to remember are intimately tied to social context and are shaped by collective concerns remains a valuable one and must continue as one of the central tenets of any investigation of why and how we remember. In order to overcome some of the difficulties in the notion of collective memory, the importance placed on the social role of memory and the formative influence of social framework of knowledge on remembering must be reconciled with a workable conceptualisation of individual memory.

Psychoanalysts from Freud onwards have centralised the importance of the past, and remembering it in the present as central to contemporary notions of self and identity in the present. In many forms of therapy, a coherent narrative of ones life is considered central to the ability to function in the present, and where this is not achieved neurotic symptoms or a disrupted sense of self may occur. The aim of interventions is to rework and establish a liveable, usable narrative of the past in order to achieve a functional present self. The

remembering the past in the present is therefore the central process we have in everyday life for constructing a sense of who we are that can endure over time. Our identity is the name 'we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves in, the narratives of the past' (Hall, 1994: 394) and so inevitably we cannot have a sense of who we are without having some form of knowledge about who we have been.

Generating these narratives of self is not a finite action. Annette Kuhn (2002) goes beyond the established notion that 'telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves' to suggest that memory provides the raw material for constructing identity and a sense of self (p.2-3) and as such, the processes of constructing and reconstructing narratives is never complete. A remembered event can be reformulated or resituated in relation to one's contemporary life, altering or re-imagining our own perspectives on who we are, and why. As Anthony Giddens (1991) notes, in late modernity the self has become a 'reflexive project' and one which we increasingly assume individual responsibility for. Remembering is always under review, referring back to itself, casting the past in new relationships to the remembering subject. Personal remembering is then an ongoing process necessary to establishing our selves as bounded and cohesive subjects, but its ever changing nature and constant revision of meaning enables our sense of self to be responsive to the present, enabling us to act within it.

An attempt to bring the remembering that constitutes the self and mnemonically invested social formations into view of one another, as they exist in our everyday lives, provides a double-edged understanding of memory. On the one had we are able to understand the function of shared repositories of meaning in constructing and maintaining a group's sense of itself and enabling us to assess the role of contemporary socio-political pressures exerting and shaping mnemonic action. On the other hand we are able to conceptualise those instances of remembering where the memory exceeds and destabilises a normative presentist function, rising unbidden, piercing us with pathos. Beyond this we are able to see these two dimensions as mutually constitutive. Collective memory is diffuse and 'distributed' (Wertsch, 2002, 23-4) in so far as it is enacted by individuals and is subject to their own agency but is structured and shaped by the shared knowledge of particular social groups and formations. The difference between these two dimensions is not that either one or the other is in operation at any given time, but that the remembering act is made up of both dimensions acting in concert with one another, acting on each other with varying degrees of influence, resulting in different levels of semantic fit between them.

It is important to stress the importance of situating remembering as active, something that is done in particular forms in everyday experience. Memory does not float free from its performance but rather is identifiable in the moments when it is being performed in the actions, social and individual, of day-to-day life. This dual focus on the oscillation between social and individual and contexts of enactment allows for an analysis of, not only the points at which remembering is seen to act in a stabilising or conforming way in relation to a stable sense of self or group identity, but also the instances where contention and subversion occur, challenging accepted historical norms or ideas. This ultimately positions remembering as it is lived, as a process of continuous negotiation, via acts of mnemonic labour, both of the self and the social world in which we are situated.

In achieving a negotiation of memory as both social and individual, it is necessary, as Susannah Radstone (2000) identifies in the work of Frigga Haug, to relocate memory in 'the space between an imposed ideology, (...) and the possibility of an alternative way of understanding experience' (p.18). Their relationship in that 'liminal space' (ibid) is a complex one. Each remembering act is a unique conjoining of the social and personal, a site where the two interact in anything from radical tension to easy consensus. Remembering can be a public performance or a private reflection which in very different degrees draw on individual agency and social frameworks, but never to the total exclusion of one or the other. Needless to say these dimensions are not separate or easily divisible processes but are identifiable components of mnemonic action. They act together, mutually constituting one another. Personal memory feeds into a repository of social and cultural knowledge just as mnemonically invested cultural texts can circulate and contribute meaningfully to the ways in which people remember their own personal experience.

In order to assess the complementarity of these mutually sustaining mnemonic modes we must avoid the risk of collapsing them into one another so we can continue to make meaningful distinctions between them. In which case they must be addressed individually yet in view of one another, flagging up the points at which they intersect and overlap in the contexts in which they occur in everyday life. Attention must first be turned to the ways in which we remember, personally and individually, incorporating the mnemonic actions which are undertaken privately, at a distance from, or yet to be communicated to the social and cultural world.

Memorising the Self.

Memory that is concerned with constructing a coherent sense of who one is over time, is most frequently concerned with accounts of a person's individual experience across their lifetime. This concern with one's own past experience, organised and shaped from the perspective of the present, is best described as autobiographical memory. The notion of autobiography or mnemonically ordering one's personal experience is intimately tied to the modern concept of self-identity. Contemporary criticism of autobiography has moved beyond a notion of the self as autonomous and transcendent that was predominant in early modernity, and which is characteristic in some of the most historically lauded autobiographical works such as Augustine's *Confessions*. Late modernity has ushered in a new contingency in understanding the self. Deborah Battaglia (1995) positions '*the self as a representational economy:* a reification continually defeated by mutable entanglements with other subjects' histories, experiences, self-representations; with their texts, conduct, gestures, objectifications' (p.2, italics in original). Taking this fluid and changeable understanding of the self as a starting point, remembering can be positioned as an activity through which accounts and narratives of the self can be generated and legitimised through the provision of a history, a past or a root that is coherent with the identity of the person remembering in the present.

The emphasis on provisionality and changeability of a contemporary self is congruent with the way remembering occurs in everyday lives. An account of the past as we remember it is never fixed. It is always subject to review, in light of ongoing experience. The memory of a broken relationship alters as we progress in and through new partnerships and friendships, our position in relation to the past changes as so to does our understanding of it. This is not to imply that by its contingency and relativity the past is rendered meaningless, rather than its meaning at any given point in time is only the truth for that moment. Like shifting sand, temporal meaning never remains still.

The question then needs to be raised: what is the specific contribution of memory to this shifting and contingent self that is in a continuous process of construction? One of the primary answers to that question is continuity. In order to achieve a sense that we are the same person now as we were when we were at school for example, we need to imagine our self-as-we-were from the perspective of our self-as-we-are. In so doing we can identify similarities or at least causal relationships between them. If for example we behave in a particular way in the present, our memory of past actions can serve as an explanatory device for our present day responses; I am nervous during a job interview because I have often been nervous in similar situations, therefore I am a nervous person. The present can be rationalised

with reference to the relevant past. In creating a sense of self and its development over time, the remembering individual can position themselves as a bounded subject and communicate this to others.

The establishment of continuity then, is an invaluable contribution of memory to a useable selfhood. But alone, this would lead to an inability to change or modify in response to the pressures of the present and reconfigure one's sense of self to cope with its demands. Remembering is as much about allowing and enabling change and development as it is about anchoring the self through a temporalised narrative. It is imperative that the use of the past through remembering is not seen merely as a restructuring of the past in the interests of the present. It is a complex mutual re-imagining of both past and present when they emerge into view of one another. I may be nervous at the job interview precisely because of my narration of my past using a theme of being a 'nervous' person exemplified by a series of previous experiences, or, I may perform well and revise my narrative of being a nervous person in light of this. Not only does the present dictate our perspective on the past, the past as a source of knowledge has a role in determining our understanding of the present. It is in this twinned set of actions that a temporalised sense of self emerges.

The importance of establishing continuity of identity and a developmental narrative should not be underestimated despite theoretical moves which contest the existence of a transcendent, autonomous subject (for example, Derrida 1976). Similar to common belief in photographic indexicality, a belief in a bounded and enduring identity may be naïve, but it does little to reduce its potency as a system of understanding our position in relation to the social world, nor does it preclude the allure of the stability it provides in a lived context.

This ability to flexibly and reflexively construct a continuity of self over time is of particular utility in specific aspects of everyday life. The experience of radical disjunctures or traumas may necessitate a heavy reliance on re-remembering narratives of the personal past as a way of making sense of a given event. Among the most universal of these experiences are the death of a loved one or a breakdown in an important long-term relationship or being the victim of an accident or crime. These incidents may throw a person's understanding of themselves into question, rendering old explanatory narratives unusable in their aftermath. These times of personal crisis require radical reworking of one's past in relation to one's present in order to incorporate such life-changing events into one's story of oneself. This self-oriented mnemonic work is characterised extensively in Kazuo Ishiguro's (1990) *Remains of the Day* where Stevens, in light of the upheaval a new 'employer' brings, revisits his memories of his working life and in doing so reinterprets them, drawing from them a new and

poignant sense of himself congruent with his contemporary personal and historical circumstances.

This also highlights the important dimension of intentionality. As Stevens both deliberately and unwittingly engages in remembering to make sense of his circumstances and life course, so it is in our everyday lives. Modernity has seen intentional remembering boom with the responsibility for a coherent sense of self being increasingly adopted by individuals, heightening an appetite for the access to the past in a knowable and consumable form. Self-help, therapy and life-management literature, which emphasise a rethinking of one's past experience into a new and transformed self-narrative, clutter new and remaindered bookshops, claiming to provide the means to construct a 'new you'. There are also the unknowing ways in which we engage with the past in the interests of the self. The routine stories we form of childhood or the memories we associate with particular dimensions of our selves highlight the subtle but unrelenting operation of remembering in the continuous labour of sustaining our identities.

Despite a decidedly functional role in the establishment of a usable, temporally contingent sense of self, remembering cannot be reduced to it in relation to personal memory. Memory can be as volatile and elusive as it is utilitarian and stabilising. Remembering should not be seen as entirely conducted in the services, or under the control, of an autonomous subject. As the self is fragmentary and partial, so is the remembering process. As Woolf suggests, there are times when memories of experience slip from and exceed the conscious control of the subject (Woolf cited in Anderson, 2001: 101). Some memories of the past flash up at various points of our consciousness as un-assimilable to our frameworks of meaning. They manifest themselves as the unexplained action, the troubling memory or the painful experience to which we consistently return. As the sense we make of the past changes in relation to the present, different dimensions of the past become explainable and others are cast out as anomalous. Mnemonic labour is always conducted under the threat of fragmentation or loss of self, and always exists in the tension between continuity and change.

Remembering then, rather than achieving a unity of the self for all time, is more modestly involved in achieving this at any given point in time, a truth that only exists for the moment in which it is brought into being and is quickly consumed by the continually shifting space between past and present. As a consequence of this, the self that is created through autobiographical acts is never wholly unified, but is fragmentary and contingent. Barthes's (1977) own autobiographical work is testament to the movement between the coalescence of the subject and its own collapse. Although he rejects that remembering (in the form of

autobiographical writing) is able to constitute a bounded and transcendent subject, he realises the twinned impossibility of dismissing the notion of the subject out of hand.

In contributing to the constitution of this provisional self, remembering is involved in a complex negotiation of proximity and distance, between past and present. Change and development must be assimilated without causing radical disjunctions compromising the coherence of a knowable self. The usable past must be brought into view of the present and made imaginatively available to it, whilst retaining the integrity of the temporal distance between past and present. The collapse of this distance would fix the gaze of the present uselessly to the past, freezing development of the self, precluding development and change. On the other hand, the inability to cross this temporal distance would neuter the potency of the past as a resource for making meaning from the present or stabilising identity with historical roots. It is these double movements between temporal distance and proximity, between continuity and change, coherence and fragmentation that remembering performs in private memory. Constant mnemonic action enables a sense of self which is simultaneously reflexive and durable, capable of agency in the present.

Remembering that is oriented towards developing and sustaining a coherent subjectivity can be performed purely in private reminiscence or reflection without taking on a communicative form at the point of remembering. To indulge in these solitary moments requires the time and space to do so in everyday life, which is not equally available to all. A mother of three young children who also has a full-time career may find she has little opportunity to undertake this form of mnemonic activity whilst a retired widow may find she has a surplus of opportunities to do so. The ways in which it is possible to engage with our pasts are always regulated by the material circumstances of contemporary lives.

Remembering oriented toward the self can also be performed in a communicative event and communicated outward as well as acting on the subjectivity of the remembering agent. Autobiography is a genre where subjectivity is being woven and told as narrative, creating for the author a usable story of their own identity, whilst also communicating this out, into the social world, so it can be understood and made sense of by others, contributing to a broader repository of the past's shared meaning. This is one of the important borderlands between private and public remembering. Autobiography itself is a contested term as it treads the line between claiming to offer a tantalising window on the author's past, whilst as a rhetorical form, it ultimately denies us that taste of unfettered subjectivity. The point at which we give form to our memories they become part of a circulating collective or social memory, realised in individual communication or consciousness but shared between the members of a

group or society which sanction the legitimacy of those memories as versions or accounts of the past.

Diffusion: Collective Forms of Memory.

The notion of social or cultural memory is a complex one. Many recent studies agree that there is no free floating repository of social knowledge of the past available for individuals to access at will, nor is there a unified collective agent performing collective mnemonic action. Collective memory is rather a loose consensus established between and through a group of people, from the family through to nation-states, regarding how the past is to be understood. This consensus is realised in the mnemonic actions of the members of this group, from commemorative ceremonies to the viewing of the family album. Naturally, like remembering the self, the emerging mnemonic accounts are provisional and subject to constant contestation and revision. Social memory, its properties and its potential, can only be found in the concrete contexts in which the social activity of remembering the past is performed.

Social memory occurs at multiple and various points on the spectrum of public and private life. At its micro level, we may be talking about communicative action that takes place only between two people or may only circulate within a small group, such as a story told in confidence or a family myth passed down through the generations. By being communicated, personal memories enter into a social mnemonic economy of circulating interpretations of the past, and are both agreed upon and contested. By articulating or representing personal memory in language or other forms of discourse, the private can become deliberately or unwittingly an imaginative or creative resource for others for making sense of their own or a collective past. It is in this way that individual stories feed into wider networks of association and contribute to the establishment of collective or shared understandings of the past. Although in some cases it can be highly private, personal remembering is always enacted in social space and where it is communicated or represented, the meaning of the past is ascribed and reconfigured in light of it in the social or cultural domain which it enters.

Mnemonic activity of the family is one such place where individual, personal memories feed into a repository of shared knowledge about the past. The deployment of these collectively negotiated and sanctioned narratives then has practical and imaginative implications for both familial group and individual members. The telling of remembered family stories, humorous, serious or emotionally charged, contributes to each family member's sense of themselves as part of that family group and their position within it, and helps create a sense of group identity including the characteristics that define it as a bounded

entity. The well-worn, and gradually exaggerated family story, can communicate different things; some stories may emphasise comedy, some misfortune, and some intimacy, any of which can go some way to articulating the way the family characterises itself and its members.

As well as legitimating the membership of each individual through their participation in the story itself or in the telling of it, the intricacies of these stories may routinely position particular family members in particular roles. This may communicate to them how the group understands their identity. It is in relation to these routinely established roles or characteristics realised in each family member's consciousness, that individual senses of self can be developed which integrate the negotiated group roles and private self-perceptions into a socially and temporally contingent identity. This is not to suggest that this negotiation of family memories in the form of stories is in any way simple. They are subject to constant modification and reinterpretation as present circumstances alter the service in which the past is employed to provide explanation or justification for subsequent events. They may sit uneasily with some family member's sense of self, either independently or in relation to the group, resulting in contestation over the meaning of these group-sanctioned memories or, more seriously, a catastrophic rupture in the coherence of a group's sense of itself.

Spoken narratives are not the only way of engaging in interpersonal remembering. Photography and phonography are both technologies used mnemonically in everyday life in the interests of making sense of the past. Family albums, holiday snaps, a favourite record of a group of friends, are all modes of engaging with memory in a social context. Textual records of the past can be deliberately circulated inviting meaning to be made and agreed upon. Images are rejected and sounds discarded in the work of forming a narrative which unites a coherent group identity and can accommodate a personal sense of self. The intersubjective accounts that are generated can be progressive or regressive or used as such. Some accounts of the past can be utilised in the interests of the group or the individual (which are not necessarily the same), accommodating different interpretations in light of future development. Socially moderated versions of the past generated though cooperative remembering can also be regressive, inhibiting future development by being used to fix the past inflexibly to a given narrative. This reduces the potential of an account of the past to be used as a resource by the individual or group for positive action in the present or future

Remembering as part of a group is an activity with several roles and implications. Firstly it allows the contextualisation of a sense of self so one's own identity makes sense in the social world around it. Our memories do not stand alone in the face of the onward rush of

time, but are anchored in the accounts of the past woven in association with others. Secondly, remembering the past as a group allows the group to define and characterises itself. Whether it is a friendship group or a family, particular aspects of the past are negotiated and agreed upon in terms of their specificity, meaning and importance to the group. Lastly, it enables or disables action in the present either in terms of the individual as a remembering agent or the group as a coherent entity. The familial narrative that systematically positions one particular child as academically inept may inhibit their own ability to succeed in education as they internalise the version of their past sanctioned through the family. Conversely the cohesion achieved through the reiteration and consensus of accounts of historically rooted, shared familial characteristics for example, may enable the family to deal effectively with geographical dislocation and retain their familial unity over both time and space.

The selectivity of socially performed remembering and the meanings it makes from the past are necessarily partial, emphasising the importance of one aspect of the past over another and one interpretation of that episode over another. Like personal memories, the shared knowledge which composes collective memory is subject to contestation and the continual threat of destabilisation. Amongst usable and coherent versions of the past exist disparate and disruptive memories that cannot be easily incorporated into a repository of shared knowledge. Tensions over meaning can be divisive, both for the remembering group or the individual. Conflicting accounts of the past may generate dissent within a group, but may also cause tensions between an individual's temporal sense of self and their collectively sanctioned identity.

But threats of instability, like claims to coherence, are subject to the conditions of the ever-changing present. Some radical or far-reaching controversy over a particular dimension of the past may wreak irreparable damage to a group's sense of itself. Accusations of abuse in childhood, regardless of accuracy, render shared notions of the past impossible and contribute to a fragmentation of a sense of the family as a collective entity. Alternatively, contention over memories can disappear as quickly as they arise, either through the adaptation of shared memory, or that of the individual. New developments in the present can just as easily de-legitimate particular understandings of the past, as a remembered past could be used to make sense of them. It is this delicate balance of revision and endurance of the relationship between past and present that collective memory attempts to maintain.

Social and individual experiences are not the only resources for remembering in everyday life. In a mass-mediated cultural environment, our interactions with the past extend far beyond that of traditional forms of communication into the realm of infinitely reproducible

textual formats. Period film, music and images circulate freely, all offering different or partial versions of the past from a multitude of perspectives. Although it has been argued for elsewhere (Schudson, 1995, 347), it is problematic to see these texts themselves as social or collective memory. Rather it is in the ways in which meaning is made from them, used and shared in social life, that they can be said to constitute a collective cultural memory. Mechanical reproduction and dissemination have enabled this form of remembering, making it possible for cultural texts to be performed on an ever-increasing scale, transcending traditional boundaries to collective narratives of the past. Although our memories of seventies pop music may be negotiated in a peer group, they could easily be shaped by routinely tuning in to *Sounds of the Seventies* on BBC Radio Two and so potentially shared by many more than a small group of friends based on shared experiential memory.

Diversified accounts of the past have arguably democratised the past as a political and imaginative resource for our use in everyday remembering. The stories of ethnic and religious minorities, the experience of women and the differently-abled, circulate amongst traditional historical narratives and representations. Remembering in this context becomes not only developing a holistic sense of the past into which one's own experience fits. Our personal accounts of the past developed through personal memory can contribute to our selection of, and the meanings we make from, particular cultural texts. Cultural texts which resonate with our personal remembering can be used to contextualise and stabilise them, legitimating particular understandings of personal pasts. Cultural memory for example, is not merely constituted in an individual's personal experiences of living in a particular cultural setting or formation, it is combined with an amalgamation of those public versions of that particular cultural past which are understood and remembered by the individual, deployed in act of making sense of and communicating one's own past cultural experience.

Cultural texts can also operate very differently in our everyday acts of remembering. Burgeoning numbers of televisual explorations of particular decades such as *The Rotters Club* (2005) or *Life on Mars* (2006) contribute to our understanding of those historical periods and shape our memory of them. The language we use to articulate our memories of particular periods becomes infused with the stylised discourse of particular cultural modes of representation of the past and as a result dictates the memories which are communicated, shaping collective memory. We have an abundance of rhetoric to describe sexual permissiveness in the 1960s to the exclusion of that which adequately describes the continued restrictions and contradictions surrounding women's sexuality. This literally shapes how and what we remember.

So are we discerning cultural grazers, free to pick and choose amongst the plethora of 'histories' on offer to us, free to remember with autonomy the past that is the most resonant and useful to us collectively or individually? Or are we subject to the ideological dictations of cultural producers which limit the ways in which we are able to remember the past? The answer, somewhat inevitably, is that we find ourselves in a space of tension between the two. By this I mean two things; that collective temporal meaning is produced in the arena where the accounts of normative social structures or institutions and individual or group agency compete, and, that this is the space in which we literally find or constitute our sense of self. In the everyday actions of remembering we are continually drawing on cultural representations, social accounts and personal experience of the past, and it is through the interaction of these dimensions that our memories are formed and realised in the present as thought or communicative action.

The Politics of Memory

So far we have considered the ways in which it is possible to remember, personally, socially and culturally. What we have yet to tackle is how we *actually* remember. It is stating the obvious to suggest that we all remember the past differently. Not only is there are a plethora of interpretations of the past, but the forms our remembering takes are also divergent. Where some of us find pleasure in particular mnemonic activities, others find boredom or even discomfort. What then are the forces in operation which structure the ways in which we remember in our everyday lives? It is almost a moot point to suggest that there will never be a comprehensive account of all the ways in which we remember in our daily lives, our sociological analysis being so woefully inadequate in the face of the complexities involved in living and thinking the past, present and future all at one time. However, we are able to uncover the ways in which our frameworks of meaning and our ideological structures act on us, shaping the remembering we can perform in our socio-cultural locations.

As Tamara Hareven suggests, 'people's responses to the historical conditions they encounter are shaped by both the point in their lives at which they encounter those conditions and by the equipment they bring with them from earlier life experiences' (cited in Steedman, 1992: 22-3). Bearing this in mind, it is gender, age and ethnicity as social factors with their own accumulated history and longitudinal meanings which must be brought to bear on the remembering of individual women. In tandem with this refocusing of the diversity of women's mnemonic needs, a simultaneous awareness of the ways in which they memorise their lives is necessary. This must be expanded from traditional autobiographical forms to

incorporate the public and vernacular forms of mnemonic consciousness and communication which are used by women in response to their different social positions.

From the inception of autobiography, remembering in its communicative and representational forms has been structured by gender. Romantic notions of selfhood constructed in the literary genre of autobiography have been intimately connected with the hierarchical ordering of gender, with the remembering subject routinely and implicitly constructed as masculine (Anderson, 2001: 58-59). Beyond the importance of women's historical exclusion from public forms of remembering such as autobiography is the semantic legacy of understandings of the past being oriented to masculine experience, self and its construction. The emphasis on public experience and the de-legitimation of everyday domestic life as worthy of remembrance has systematically sidelined women's memories and has left us bereft of adequate ways of characterising and analysing women's interactions with the past.

In order to counter the exclusionary gender biases characteristic of studies of remembering, there must be a shift in focus to the specificities of women's temporal experience. Rather than beginning from the premise that remembering in everyday life is performed in the interests of constructing a fixed and transcendent ego, a more fruitful approach would consider in detail the minutiae of the ways in which women articulate the past in the present and what this achieves for them in imaginative and practical terms at any given point in time. Feminist criticism has done much to advance a contingent and fragmentary approach to gender identity which can be fruitfully continued in an examination of remembering.

Although it cannot be denied that creating a durable and cohesive sense of self through remembering is important for women as it is for men, it must be noted that women's experience is often characterised by shifting and competing roles which they occupy through their lives, both simultaneously and in sequence, problematising the applicability of masculine notions of selfhood to women's experience. The competing subject positions of mother, daughter, worker and wife, exist alongside class and ethnic identities, illustrating the uneasy relationship between public and private spheres which women often inhabit. How to reconcile these tensions mnemonically is one of the central challenges to women's everyday remembering in order to achieve a sense of self relevant to the contemporary needs of the individual woman without compromising the possibility of a holistic sense of herself.

Women's imaginative specificity is accompanied by a set of associated material conditions which have direct consequences for remembering. Despite an increased number of women gaining employment in the public sphere, domestic labour remains largely a female responsibility. One of the fundamental results of this is that women have very little private time or personal space for remembering, limiting their mnemonic potential and marshalling their mnemonic activities into familial time, where meaning is up for collective negotiation rather than being theirs alone. A responsibility for childcare brings with it the responsibility for providing children with mnemonic resources; an album of their infancy, constructing activities that will be 'good' childhood memories, or simply telling stories about the past. This, accompanied by a lack of private time can contribute to a centralisation of familial roles in the content of remembering and the family as an arena of mnemonic enactment for women.

This is, of course, dependent on a woman's personal circumstances and so women who have not had children may find private memory easier to perform in their daily lives, or else find alternative collective arenas in which mnemonic narratives can be negotiated and contribute back to their own sense of selfhood. Their own parental family might operate more prominently in their everyday remembering, or peer groups may emerge as particularly salient. Alternatively women who find themselves in sole custody of children either through the breakdown of a relationship or the death of a partner, may find their responsibility for the familial memory intensified, inevitably impacting on their everyday remembering and their personal narratives of the past.

A key factor in the ways in which gender may shape our remembering is that of age. Younger women are more likely than their grandmothers to have a long-term career and are having families later on in their lives. This extended period of independence from both their parental family and that which they may start themselves has its own mnemonic imperatives. Similarly, shrinking family size, geographical dispersal and the diminishing role of grandparents in childrearing have altered the mnemonic possibilities of women of retirement age. For an increasing number of women, these shifts have ushered in an increased amount of personal time, disposable income and diminished familial responsibility. Alongside more traditional technologies which overcome these familial gaps in time and space, such as chemical and digital photography, there has been a boom in new mnemonic technologies such as the website *Friends Reunited*. This anecdotally suggests that with the shifting nature of the familial unit as a primary resource and arena for memory at some stages of women's lives, new mnemonic phenomena are emerging in the spaces it has left.

The memories of particular generations and the differences between them have been of interest in both academic and popular circles. The notion of generation is useful in any examination of lived remembering in two ways. Firstly, an understanding of generation as a 'system of prevailing conventions' (Marias, 1970: 101) at a given historical moment which inevitably structures the ways in which we understand the world, and therefore, remember it, suggests that the historical context in which we live will shape what we remember. Secondly, as Mannheim (1972) suggests, if groups of people generate 'generational identities' when they have lived in and through the same historical and social conditions, leading them to share a similar mentality, then a generation's *understanding* of the past will be similar (p.290-1). Schumann and Scott (1989) demonstrated this with their examination of the different ways in which generations made sense of the Vietnam War.

These conceptualisations of generational memory are useful in understanding broadly based similarities in memories of events or loosely shared views of the social world among people of a similar age, but they are not enough to fully conceive of the way age and generation shapes the ways in which we remember in everyday contexts. There is also a conspicuous absence of difference within generational memory. The importance of other socio-cultural factors in remembering and their situated enactment in mnemonic work, must be held in view alongside a sense of generation if we are to develop a sensitive account of how we interact with the past.

Existing notions of generational memory are also limited in the way in which they deliberately separate one generation from another, when in practice, they are constantly in view of one another, interacting and sharing mnemonic knowledge in the processes of remembering. This is reflected in traditional understandings of generational memory emphasising the importance of experiential memory over 'appropriated' memories, as Mannheim suggests that the latter does not 'stick' as well (1972: 296). This would preclude the undeniable importance of memories we inherit and adapt which have particular pertinence to our sense of self, or 'postmemory' (Hirsch, 1997). Lisa Appignanesi's (2000) family memoir and Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer's (2003) return to Czernowitz with Marianne Hirsch's parents, both highlight the centrality of non-experiential memory in memorising our sense of self and the importance of inter-generational negotiations of meaning.

Reminiscing amongst the elderly has long been cast as an inability to cope with the present and as a signal of mental and social decline (Bertaux and Thompson, 2005: 4). This disregards the active and progressive nature of the past for the elderly not only in relation to their own sense of self, which cannot be cast as complete at any age, but also in terms of a

familial or wider social role. The passing on of familial memory is key for younger generations as it generates a historical context for their own memories, providing roots for their own sense of self and explanations of their current situations, and in a broad sense provides an account of how one came to be who one now is. But for the elderly, with age comes an increased awareness of the finitude of human life. The proximity of death forces the consideration of not only how one may remember one's own life, but how it will be remembered by others. It is at this point that personal and public narratives of self and life converge into one unified story of a life which can be told and understood. Communication of remembered narratives to children for example, can be understood as a desire to 'transcend the limitations of human mortality'(Bertaux and Thompson 2005: 7) as well as fulfilling an imaginative role for those who receive them. The process of consolidating and communicating mnemonic narratives by older people may in some ways be a way of making knowable, and to some degree establishing control over, the ultimate shift of temporality and consciousness that death will bring.

This desire to control meaning impacts on the ways in which memories are deployed. Full narratives or stories which present a particular perspective may be preferred over other forms of representation which may leave meaning and interpretation more open. Telling the story inevitably involves giving an account of what the past means, and in doing so closes down alternative meaning. However, the entry of these narratives into a social environment makes the definition of meaning impossible. Competing historical narratives are always on offer and that which is presented as evidence reviewed and re-interpreted. Although play over meaning remains the same, in later life the stakes for the player are somewhat higher as we draw towards our inevitable exclusion from the game.

It is important to recognise the different role that elders and aging play in different ethnic cultures. For example, older British Asians may continue to live in the heart of the nuclear family in a way that is less common for other ethnic groups. This might sustain the role of the family as an area and resource for everyday remembering and in its practical implications, decrease remembering. However, in diasporic groups memory has to deal with the double dislocation of a changed geographical location and a changed present. The role of elders may be to retain and articulate the cultural memory of a particular ethnic group and communicate it to the family, so providing a continuity with the cultural past in a new environment. Gender is also a dimension that reverberates differently in various ethnic groups. The role of women in the present will inevitably dictate to a degree the mnemonic role they have via practical and imaginative constraints, opportunities and expectations placed on them.

In different ethnic groups alternative resources for memory are on offer. For many people, alongside family memory, runs a vast repository of cultural narratives of a 'British' past. For a member of an ethnic minority, access to one's cultural past is one geographical step removed, requiring alternative mnemonic action to be taken in its place. The burden of cultural memory may fall within the family or a diasporic community, bringing cultural memory increasingly into the realm of collective, social remembering. Familial narratives may become increasingly overtly structured by a cultural past as well as an interpersonal one, intensifying connections between social and cultural pasts.

Engaging with a cultural past through everyday remembering might well take forms other than interpersonal communication. Implicit and explicit pedagogical activity might be utilised in the interests of performing cultural memory in everyday contexts. Religious narratives may become of heightened importance for their historical connections with a particular cultural past, and through their enactment can situate the individual within that specific interpretation of the past. Families with an Irish ethnic background may well choose to send a child to a traditional dance class or music class. Without explicitly narrating a cultural history, the child can be immersed in and induced to perform mnemonic cultural labour, sustaining a collective narrative of homeland and in communicating that myth to the self, infusing one's own memories with a sense of ethnic affiliation and history. Remembering in these contexts is not necessarily a conscious act, but can, through rituals and traditions, provide bodily connections to pasts which are distant in temporal or geographical terms. Whether we are kneeling in a church or dancing an Irish reel, we literally come to inhabit our memories through our everyday physical actions.

As well as those who have made the transition from one country to another, the second generation of those families have slightly different mnemonic imperatives from their parents. For example, these are not migrants adjusting to life in a British context, but are dually British and a member of an ethnic minority, and as such have entirely new temporal and cultural needs. Straightforward adoption of the cultural memories of their parents, or that of mainstream British culture, would be insufficient to serve their present double cultural consciousness. They are not reconciling the politics of home and abroad, but both the politics of belonging and not belonging to both cultural groups. Second generation ethnic minority members are then in the processes of using the historical legacy and practical resources of both cultures to forge entirely new cultural memories and modes of remembering. The melding of musical genres to transcend the distinctions between old temporal narratives of origins, forge new ones by making new temporal connections, making the past relevant to

new cultural affiliations, is one such way that this can be performed. As Stuart Hall (1998) suggests, this cultural negotiation is not a matter of generating mnemonic narratives which reflect the essence of a second generation ethnic identity (p.223), but involves remembering which is fluid and dynamic, which draws flexibly on the cultural resources available. This allows remembering to be responsive to individual and collective cultural needs at any given time or context.

Towards an Inhabited Memory?

But how does this confluence of the public and the private account for the sensations involved in remembering? How do we feel our memories and what are the sensations involved? Some mnemonic experience is characterised by the way it is camouflaged amongst our everyday activities, suggesting that the operation of memory is being undertaken effectively and competently, the business of constructing the self is a social context going largely unnoticed in the activity of living. There are however, those instances where memory is brought sharply into view as an experience of intense pathos or pain. It is at these points that the interaction of public and private pasts is keenly felt either in a radical transgression or misfit between the two. Historical change is brought into tension with experience, making the reconciliation of the two problematic, noticeable and therefore painful. Where one's personally remembered experience of gender is in contradiction of remembered cultural narratives for example, the polysemic nature of a memory can be brought into view with all of the associated difficulties for coherence of self and social group that involves. The converse of this is also true. Where memories are keenly felt in a pleasurable sense, we may be experiencing the intensity of a semantic fit between our personal and collective pasts, casting our past at its most knowable and most relevant.

Above all things, whether intensely felt or passing unnoticed, remembering is a lived activity. It can be deliberate or unwitting, painful or pleasurable, stabilising or fragmentary, negotiating the complex relationship between past and present. In relation to our sense of self, it permits us to reconcile who we have been with who we now are, enabling us to weave the story of our selves. In a collective sense, remembering is an action that constructs and maintains particular meanings of the past. It provides a ways of participating in group life as well as constructing the narratives which act as imaginative boundaries, marking out those who belong from those who do not, and most importantly enabling groups to respond and adapt to the demands of an ever-shifting present. But these two dimensions are performed in unison in the mnemonic act, bringing social and individual dimensions of the past together. At once the mnemonic act is both shared and unique. Remembering is part of the fabric of both

our imaginative life and practical, physical world and it is in this holistic sense that we literally inhabit memory and live through it.

Remembering as an action is a point of expression for all of the social locations which we occupy. The very enactment of memory activates our specific and collective ways of seeing the world which in turn shape what we remember of the past. How we articulate the past is therefore always a joint operation of the individual and the collective. Our social location is the unique locus of a multitude of social factors, and given that memory always has to be performed by a human agent, remembering and the subject who enacts it, is always private or personal. However, as our remembering is conducted in a social context and our consciousness is shaped by social factors which are shared with others, our remembering is always in some sense collective, either in content or performance.

It is the reciprocal movement between the personal and the social in everyday remembering which makes it such a driving force for progress, individually and collectively. As an individual we are able to achieve psychic coherence allowing us agency and the potential to develop in the present. In collective terms, the constant adaptation of the collective through the contributions of individual remembering means that social memory is always dynamic, adapting to the requirements of its participants. The intensely felt connections and transgressions are the extreme examples of this in action. Even when there is a painful disparity between personal and collective memory, the fact that these remain in view of one another means the possibility for change and renewal in the present is retained. It is when this movement is broken between the personal and public that the historical potential of everyday remembering is broken. When everyday memories become disconnected with the social world for example through an individual social isolation, the personal can no longer act on the collective, nor can the collective adapt and modify the personal, risking disparity and coherence over meanings of the past and an inability to be responsive to the demands of contemporary life. Change and development are precluded when articulation and communication are inhibited.

Chapter 6
Memory and Method.

Introduction

It is now necessary to move beyond the theoretical assessment of potential relationships to the past in late modernity to an examination of how these potentialities are realised in the everyday lived experience of women. This signals a move from the ontological and epistemological concerns of the first part of the thesis towards a phenomenological consideration of time and temporality in the second. In order to effectively illuminate the experience of the past in the present in its various modes, empirical study of the ways in which women articulate and enact relationships with time past, present and future is necessary. Despite the division of the thesis into two discrete sections, this is not to advocate a rift between the theoretical and empirical study of temporality and the ways that it is lived. The thesis is structured in this way for the purposes of conceptual coherence and organisational clarity rather than a critical separation of these interpretative techniques. Nor should the former theoretical chapters be seen as a preamble into the 'real work' of empirical study of an audience or public. The bringing together of the theoretical and empirical is, as Ien Ang suggests in her insistence on a distinction between uses and gratifications research and cultural studies, motivated by a desire to 'arrive at a more historicized insight into the ways in which audience activity is related to social and political structures and processes' (Ang, 1996b: 314).

So far, the nature of the past in the present and how it can be articulated using commonplace media technologies has been treated as floating free from contexts of concrete existence and performance. This again is organisational artifice. Everyday experience and their situated performance should be treated as the hub of time and temporality. It is the point of confluence of private and public memories, of social and individual pasts, of the text and reader and of progressive and conservative renderings of time. It is here that abstracted talk of past, present and future and how they can be conceived is brought to life in the minutiae of the mundane, yet fantastic, remembering undertaken in daily life.

There is an established tradition of examining the everyday in several disciplines. In the borderlands of history and cultural studies, *Making Histories* edited by Richard Johnson et al (1982) insisted on the role of private memory in the generation of historical narrative in order to problematise the established power relations entrenched in conventional historical

work which silenced and obscured contestation of dominant ideologies (see Harootunian 2004, for an expanded critique of the ideological conservatism of traditional historiography). Oral history and popular forms of articulating the past in the present were key sources, challenging the hegemony of artefactual traces and the written word. This movement towards recognising the historical importance of vernacular forms continues to be practised in a significant amount of historical study despite a continuing tension with regard to 'truth' and 'ideology' in the crossover between history and cultural studies (see Brabazon, 200:, 46).

In sociology, one way in which the everyday has risen to prominence is via the burgeoning critical attention being paid to memory and remembering, particularly with reference to its collective forms. Recent reinvigorations of Maurice Halbwach's (1992) work on collective memory coincides with a 'reorientation of cultural sociology, much like that of recent historiography, from "interest in ideas developed by knowledge specialists... [to] structures of knowledge or consciousness that shape the lay persons thinking"' (Swidler and Arditi 1994, quoted in Olick and Robbins 1998). These shifts have lead to a sociology more grounded in the everyday at both a theoretical and empirical level. Although labelled a history scholar, Luisa Passerini's work on the popular memory of Fascism in Italy is a key example of this prioritisation of everyday experience. In more traditional sociological circles, Pierre Bourdieu's (1997) analysis of museum attendees is intimately concerned with the minutiae of everyday experience as is Tia DeNora's examination of the experience of music in everyday life (2000). Cultural studies from its inception has successfully centralised the everyday. From the early work of the Birmingham school to contemporary studies of dance culture such as Steve Redhead's *Repetitive Beat Generation* (2000).

These broad disciplinary movements towards a recognition of the importance of lived experience inform this study at methodological and analytical levels. In relation to the aims of the empirical work, they have highlighted the need to resituate the concept of nostalgia and the mnemonic imagination as modes of articulating a relationship with the past into the contexts of their performance in order to develop both a more robust and sensitive model of how people negotiate temporality in modernity. The previous chapters situated them in relation to the broad sweeps of history, charting emergent ways of relating to the past under the conditions of modernity. The following chapters seek to locate them in their contexts of enactment, foregrounding the minutiae of their experience.

Ethnographically inspired emphasis on everyday contexts has been a feature of media studies for several decades. Reception studies such as Ien Ang's innovative work on women watching *Dallas* (1985) and Joke Hermes (1995) work on the reading of women's magazines

are just two of the analyses which inform this study's treatment of the text *in situ*. The previous analysis of photography and phonography as technologies of memory is, in light of this, taken as a starting point for the further consideration of these technologies from the perspective of the user, critically enhancing previous theoretical commentary with a more detailed look at the processes of temporal meaning making associated with these media in their environments of use. As everyday technologies their relationship to memory is only actualised in their situated use and the circulation of the image and sound as cultural and personal texts.

The Depth Interview Method.

Focus on the everyday has led to the use of a method of data collection which could adequately deal with remembering and modes of relating to the past in their mundane settings. Oral history is a key influence in the methodology of this study by virtue of its capacity to engage with the politics of the everyday, redressing the narratives of the past that have been silenced by the dominant historiographical traditions. This is particularly pertinent to the investigation of women developing connections and creating dialogue between the past and present. In this vein, the memory-work method pioneered by Frigga Haug (Haug et al., 1987) has been drawn on its embrace of subjectively and retrospectively constructed narratives of experience as viable sources of data for the study of women's experience.

Choosing depth interviews was intimately related to a desire for an increased democratisation of the research arena, deliberately seeking to equalise to the greatest possible extent the dynamics of power between the interviewer and the interviewee. The loosely structured interviews allowed the participant the freedom to explore each question as far as they desired and reformulate questions to more adequately address their own experience. Their own interpretation of their actions was encouraged as was reflection and the sharing of ideas. Methodologically this conforms with the tenets of feminist research practice, not only in placing 'value on women's experience of their personal and social worlds' and the embracing of 'intersubjectivity' (Rutledge Sheilds and Dervin, 1993: 67) but also in the freedom it provides for women to construct the parameters of the research in the context of the interview.

The decision to examine only women's experience in the data gathering and analysis was predicated on a desire to contribute to redressing the gender imbalance of cultural studies which has been identified and challenged by theorists such as Angela McRobbie (1981) and Sue Wise (1990). Experience and subjectivity are inextricable from the politics and

performance of gender. From a feminist perspective, the experiences of gender mark every aspect of life, be it political, economic or socio-cultural. Memory and remembering are systems by which we retrospectively make sense of our experience and are continually in the process of being respectively reconstituted by experience. Why, then, are they so frequently examined in an un-gendered way? Women's history and a woman's past has been a primary objective of the feminist movement in recent times, yet less commonly dealt with is their understanding and use of the past. One of the central objectives of this empirical work is to remedy this asexuality by interweaving a theoretical consideration of everyday remembering and empirical work with women of various ages and backgrounds, making visible the explicitly female experience of the time and temporality.

This is not to suggest that memory should be imbued with an essentialised concept of gender which has been cautioned against elsewhere (Leydesdorff et al., 2005: viii). Rather memory is gendered similarly to everyday experience, as an enactment and continuous construction in socio-cultural contexts which are subject to change across temporal, geographical and cultural locations (Leydesdorff, 1999). This diversity of experience is reflected in the process of data collection. Of the nineteen women sampled, ages ranged from eighteen years old to the mid-eighties. Six of the women were of Asian origin and the remaining thirteen were Caucasian British. Some women came from professional middle-class backgrounds and some from working-class. In the process of analysis, these varied experiential perspectives are engaged with and integrated into a consideration of the way women relate to the past, foregrounding difference as well as commonality.

As an empirical tool, the qualitative depth interview is not designed to be socially representative insofar as I am not attempting to make statistically significant extrapolations from the interview data. Rather what is being proposed is a nuanced and sensitive exploration of women's ways of dealing with late modern temporality and performing relationships with the past. This avoids the theoretical cul-de-sac of attempting to attain an elusive objectivity in the name of scientific rigour, instead embracing both the researcher and the participant's subjectivity and reflecting on it in the process of the research.

There were considerable practical issues in undertaking depth interviews. Recruitment was selective in that the study intended to consider the experience of women of different ages, ethnicities and class backgrounds, but a systematic way of recruiting women was still necessary in order to gain sufficient numbers of participants. This was eventually achieved via a network of council-run book clubs in Leicestershire. Acting on my behalf, the council's literacy officer invited volunteers to participate in one-to-one interviews in a

location of their choosing. This system did not yield any older participants of either British or Asian origin and so alongside this, I attended a reminiscence group, a women's support group and a support group for ethnic elders run at a local community centre, giving a short talk on the project and inviting women to participate.

The depth interviews themselves were based around a list of topic headings which were intended to guide the interviews. This was constructed in preference to a list of questions which I felt would compromise the flow of everyday talk that the interviews aimed to achieve and limit the participant's responses. These interview guides evolved over the course of the interviewing period and as new and unexpected topics emerged. I was keenly aware that the interviews would be difficult to conduct as I speculated that remembering and the experience of it is a subject rarely reflected on in everyday life. In order to counter potential confusion the participants were invited to bring along a particular photograph or piece of music that had a special significance for them. These were then used as a starting point for the interview in order to allow the participant to begin with something tangible to discuss, which could then be used as an example which we could refer back to through the interview.

The interviews lasted between one and two hours and an initial observation was that the participants were largely comfortable and expansive in contemplating the role of memory in their lives and reflecting on their mnemonic practices. This quickly cast doubt upon my initial assumption that memory would be enacted largely unconsciously. The interviews resulted in comprehensive and sophisticated accounts of both memories, and practices of remembering generated by the participants which were then transcribed verbatim.

Conducting the depth interviews raised some issues with regard to the politics of qualitative interviewing for academic research. Firstly, language barriers between researcher and ethnic elders had not been anticipated to the extent they were experienced. The use of an interpreter was problematic in the sense that the free flow of speech and the aura of confidentiality that characterises the one-on-one interview was to a certain extent compromised, however as a younger Asian woman herself, the interpreter was able to provide a wealth of historical and cultural information that made a more sensitive consideration of the interview material possible. The privileged position of the researcher in terms perceived authoritative status and educational capital proved a source of some discomfort for several of the older participants, particularly when there was a perceived disparity in the class status of the researcher and the participant. This was often manifested in questions such as 'am I doing this right?' or 'I'm probably not the best person to talk to'. Deborah Kestin van de Hoonard (2005: 402-404) encountered similar methodological issues in her work with older, widowed

women. She asserts that reassurance, reformulating questions to suit the participant and handing control of the interview to the participant as far as is possible whilst remaining within the parameters of the research aims, is the most successful response to participant reticence under these conditions. To enhance the comfort of participants, all interviews were carried out in their homes (with one exception which was conducted at Loughborough University for logistical reasons).

Analysing Women's Talk

In the process of analysis, the interview data was viewed and treated in very specific ways. Most fundamentally, this involved seeing the interview talk as narrative rather than as either factual or fictional accounts of an event. This mode of treating interview data is perhaps most cogently described in Annette Kuhn's (2002a) examination of cinema going and cultural memory. She suggests that participants' accounts should be

> ...treated not only as data but also as discourse, as material for interpretation...For an understanding of cultural memory, it is important to attend to the ways in which memory is produced in the activity of telling stories about the past, personal or shared; to the construction and narration of these memory stories; and in the present instance to the ways in which cinema figures in and shapes these memories. Analysis of ethnographic material is thus conducted on two levels: firstly, it is treated as data which generate insights into the place of cinema going and cinema culture in people's everyday lives in the 1930s; and secondly, it is read discursively, for the light it sheds on the nature and workings of cinema memory. (p.9)

The interviews in this study are treated similarly in the sense that they are both indicators of the content of memory and of the way memory is constructed and articulated, thus recognising that the space of the interview as a memory act in itself (Rosen, 1998: 1). This closely relates to a specific understanding of the relationship between gender and memory so fundamental to this study. Firstly, the content of memory is intimately gendered. Lived experience and the socio-cultural positioning of women means that the very fabric of experience remembered is always infused with the subjectivities of gender. A woman's memories of her childhood will be structured by the conventions of femininity which played upon her as a social actor at that time. When this experience is brought into the present *in absentia*, the gendered conditions of the original experience are inextricable from the memory itself. Secondly, contemporary politics of gender govern women's participation in

remembering as a contemporary activity. Balance between public and private experience, domestic and waged labour and gendered technological development all structure how, when and why women interact with the past.

Kuhn's reading of Clifford Geertz's explanation of ethnographic work is drawn on in this study as a guide for conducting the analysis of the interview data. In her own analysis, she adopts Geertz's assertion that ethnography's thick description and interpretation are continuous with one another (2002a: 9). In terms of structuring the analysis, Wolcott's (1994) model, which proposes a sequence of description, analysis and interpretation of interview data, is used. Interpreting the women's talk is centrally concerned with finding patterns, regularities and irregularities within the data whilst keeping in view the structures of power that shape women's experience and past. This remains deliberately explicit throughout the analysis in recognition of inevitable partiality and the open-endedness of interpretative process.

The decision to foreground gender in the analysis of the empirical data was retrospectively bolstered by an emerging commonality between the interviews of a specifically feminine relationship to the past, identifiable despite centrally important differences between the women's experience on the basis of age and ethnicity and self-consciously referred to by the participants. In recognition of femininity as a fundamentally important subject position shared by the participants, it is from this perspective that the written analysis commences, interweaving age, class and ethnically related differences into an overall assessment of the ways in which women relate to the past.

In practice this form of analysis was conducted in a series of steps. The transcripts were initially read through. In the process of this reading key themes were identified. These included materials of memory, familial memory, imagination, bodily sensations, and arenas of memory and mediated memory. The transcripts were broken down into these initial themes by cutting and pasting excerpts into thematic groupings. The groupings themselves were then reconsidered, generating new thematic structures until a satisfactory series of commonalities and differences could be identified between the transcripts. In tandem with the thematising of the data the transcripts were also read intuitively. Segments of transcript that appeared out of place, unusual or unexplainable were identified and set aside. This often involved striking or incongruous use of language or intensely emotional episodes or anecdotes. The themes were then worked up analytically, through the process of writing. The fieldwork analysis was initially written as one continuous piece of analysis and was only subsequently carved into distinct chapters. This constituted the final stage of thematising the material. The writing

process drew out the relationships between the individual women, their socio-cultural and historical position and their enactments of memory. The intuitively identified anomalies were deconstructed individually and read against the background of the patterned usages of memory identified through the thematic analysis. This combination of thematic analysis combined with an intuitive approach guarded against subsuming unique individual experience into a series of overarching themes as it identified the instances where these themes were not sufficient to explain experiences of time and memory, as well as where they were able to be used as explanatory frameworks.

Participant Profiles.

All of the following profiles use pseudonyms in the interests of participant anonymity in line with British Sociological Association guidelines.

Sarah is a white British woman in her mid-twenties who works as an Arts Development Officer for a local district council. She comes from a traditional nuclear family (one sibling) which is based in Sheffield, with whom she is close. She is in a long-term heterosexual relationship. She is educated to degree level and has spent time travelling abroad.

Rani is a British Asian woman in her mid-twenties who works at a local arts centre and has lived in Loughborough all her life. Her parents emigrated from the Bengal region of India and she has five siblings, some of whom she has a close relationship with. With others the relationship is more ambivalent. She does not specifically mention education in her interview which suggests that she left education at either 16 or 18 years old. She is single and has spent time travelling abroad.

Ann is a white British woman in her mid-twenties who has grown up in Lincolnshire and is imminently moving to Leeds to move in with her long-term partner. She is an exercise physiologist for a private healthcare company. She is from a traditional nuclear family with one sibling. She is educated to degree level.

Maya is a British Asian woman in her mid-to-late twenties. She has a 12 year old son and they cohabit with her long-term partner. She is educated to degree level and has spent time travelling abroad. Her mother and father are separated and she is particularly close to her sister. She is currently setting up a dog training business.

Abha is an eighteen year old British Asian woman at sixth form college and is awaiting entry to university. She lives with her parents and her younger brother and is part of a close extended family network which is distributed within Britain and across the globe. She has lived in Leicester all her life.

Jenny is a white British female in her early thirties. She is originally from North London, spent a lot of her school years in Bath and is now based in Leicestershire. She is educated to postgraduate degree level and is a community artist. Her parents divorced when she was eleven and she has a slightly ambivalent relationship with her family.

Sonia is a white British female in her early thirties. She is originally from Manchester but moved to Leicestershire with her ex-husband. She did not go into higher education and works in the public sector. Her father died when she was two years old and she has a close relationship with her nuclear family. She is currently cohabiting with her fiancée.

Gayle is a white British female in her mid-thirties. She has a postgraduate diploma and is a part-time management consultant. She lived in Germany as a young child and then moved to Blackpool for the most part of her education. She comes from a traditional nuclear family and has one sister. She has two children and a husband.

Lillian is a white British female in her early forties. Has a postgraduate degree and originates from Leicestershire. She has two children and a husband. Her mother has recently died and she remains close to her father. She has spent time abroad and currently works as a librarian.

Rachel is a white British female in her mid-to-late forties. She has three British Indian sons and is divorced from their Indian father. Her mother has recently died. Her parents divorced when she was young and initially disapproved of her own marriage although relations with them subsequently improved. She lives with her three sons and is embarking on a new romantic relationship. She recently gained a degree as a mature student and now works as a project manager at a local arts centre.

Mukta is an African Indian woman in her mid-to-late fifties who has been resident in Britain since her twenties. She was born in Kenya to Asian parents, went to school in Nairobi and came to Britain with her husband and young son after Kenyan independence following a short spell living with her husband's family in Mombassa. She had twins after arriving in Britain. She has considerable health problems and lives with husband and eldest son who also has health problems. She has recently retired from her job as a machinist.

Francesca is a white British woman in her mid-to-late fifties who has always lived locally. She is a 'freelance educator' and gives historical talks and sets up projects with diverse sectors of the community. She comes from a traditional nuclear family although her mother had an accident early in Felicity's life which problematised their relationship. She has three siblings, is married and has had three children, one of whom died in early infancy.

Louise is a white British woman in her mid-to-late fifties who has always lived in the Leicester area. She has four children and a husband and comes from a traditional nuclear family. She finished school at 18 and married although was offered a place at university. She is a childminder and also does a considerable amount of charitable and community work.

Lalan is a Indian women in her mid-sixties who is on an extended visit to her daughters in Britain. She originates from East Africa but her permanent residence is India. She lives alone but her daughter's husband lives nearby. Her parents and nuclear family suffered great economic and physical hardships in the expulsion of Indian people from Tanzania under Idi Amin. She married at 18 and has two daughters. Her working life has been exclusively domestic.

Iris is a white British woman in her early sixties. She has always lived locally. She did not go into further or higher education. Her husband, from whom she was separated, suffered from paranoid schizophrenia for seventeen years and died three years ago. She has two daughters from her marriage and lives alone. She had a very difficult relationship with her own mother and her father is never mentioned. She has recently retired from her job as a cleaner.

Susan is a white British woman in her early seventies. She has always lived locally and comes from a traditional nuclear family. She left school at fifteen and married her husband at twenty one. She has two children and several grandchildren. She is retired from her career as a social worker for the blind.

Meera is a Indian woman living with her daughter's family. She married at 18 and moved to Tanzania with her husband, remaining there for twenty years, but was forced to move back to India and then to Britain after their expulsion from Tanzania under Idi Amin. Her mother is 104 years old and lives in India and she had five children although the first two of these died in infancy. She had formal education as a young child in India and worked on the family farm. In her married life, aside from extensive domestic labour, she worked in a factory upon arrival in Britain from which she has now retired.

Grace is a white British woman in her early eighties. She was born locally and since her husband's death twenty years ago she has returned to the area. She comes from a traditional nuclear family and has three brothers, two of whom have died, three children and several grandchildren. She left school at fourteen and her work has mainly been domestic.

Eva is a white British woman in her mid-eighties. She was an only child and her parents died when she was young and she was brought up by her grandmother. She separated from her husband with whom she had children three children, and moved into the Loughborough area. She also has a step-daughter and a foster son. Paid work is not mentioned aside from work she did during the war.

Chapter Seven
Gendering memory.

Remembering Gendered Experience.

Gender is intimately connected to remembering, structuring both what is remembered and how this can be enacted, acting simultaneously on past and present. But the experience of being a woman and remembering as one is not a unitary affair. Other social variables and markers of difference interact in everyday life to produce unique subject positions and multiple social affiliations. Gender as a social category, a shared subjectivity or an individual identity, is both multiple and universal. It is constructed in the memories of class, ethnicity and womanhood and revised in its continual reproduction, inflected with age and revised in each historical moment. Remembering is a process in which these complex relations are brought to bear, and through which they are realised in the construction and reconstruction of temporal identities, social relations and cultural meaning.

In the first instance one of the most simple ways in which gender is articulated in the processes of remembering must be addressed: the content of memories. The gendered nature of lived experience is manifested in memories and remains when it is recalled, structuring our experiential mnemonic resources. The gender politics of the past are brought into the present through the creation of mnemonic narratives and, in the processes of remembering, are reviewed and made sense of in the context of contemporary life.

The content of the participant's memories was both explicitly and implicitly gendered:

> **Susan**: *Got married at twenty one. Alan was the only one that broke me down in the end, I hadn't got much time for boys before he arrived. But we'd met each other at my cousins wedding and my mother was dancing with him. He was very tall and there wasn't many tall men about in those days.*

There is a definite sense in this recollection of Susan giving in to the mounting social as well as personal pressure to marry, implicitly conveying the gender conventions of the time and the resulting experience of it. At the same time there is a clear indication of conflict or frustration with such convention, caught in an end-phrase which is suggestive of both her husband's persistence and her own resistance. Her use of the verb 'broke', which might also refer to taming a horse, signals the tension between her own desires and the oppressive

imposition of gendered norms. Gender is narrated in the memory both as acknowledgement of normative expectations and an expression of disaffection with them. This tension may have been experienced at the time but most significantly this narrative device acts retrospectively as a way of making sense of ambiguous actions. This tension remains implicit and unelaborated in Susan's account, potentially signalling a discomfort with a confrontational rejection of gendered expectations. Maya on the other hand confronts the gender dimensions of her past experience more directly and with less ambiguity.

> **Maya**: *[I'm a] typical girl that comes from a broken home who got pregnant at age (laugh) y'know and perhaps made it in the end. One of those sad but true stories.*
> **Interviewer**: *Have you always thought that?*
> **Maya**: *I think it's something that's always been at the back of my mind. Cos really the way that I look at it is that, these life patterns are kind of y'know, you start childhood or whatever, a girl grows up, she goes to college, she gets married, she has children and that's it. And I think that's one way. Another way is perhaps that she would not go to college and maybe stay single or not have children and focus on her own kind of life or career or whatever and I just think that people's views now are very much changing from traditional fairy princess, white wedding, let's get married, have two point four children. Umm that's really kind of...women want more, other than that. That was the typical fairy princess and I think more now people are realising um that it's more of a cultural thing and it's happening everywhere with people (pause). I'm not quite sure about that because my life hasn't gone into that two point four children or whatever but my sister's life did, very much go that way. But I always said I didn't want that type of life.*

Maya engages with the changing gender expectations that have formed her experience and her memories of it. Gender informs the content of her memory in terms of her original experiences being infused with particular gendered expectations of a girl's route through life, but also she utilises gender as a way of explaining other's actions such as those of her sister. There is an emphatic distinction between two possible life trajectories for women. This divides up the narrative – 'that's one way', but it's not hers; she chooses another way, even if she is somewhat tentative about what it involves because it is far less common. The centrality of gendered life patterns as an explanatory device in Maya's story indicates the extent to which gendered expectations and more importantly their transgression was a key feature of her original experience, and so also her memory of it. The statement that she has 'always' been clear about she how she intended to live her life, and that she has 'always' thought of her life in terms of her conformity (or not) to established expectations of women, imbues both past and present contexts with her specifically gendered perspective, setting up an explanatory continuity between past and present. Gender closely informs both her original experience and the retrospective narration of it, contributing to a continuous sense

of a gendered self and an associated position in relation to gendered expectations which can be used as a device to explain her ongoing situation, actions and experience.

Maya's reference to her own experience as 'typical' is an important discursive device. In constructing her experience as potentially shared by many women, she is effectively legitimating it, if not as a culturally approved life course, at least as one which is recognised and can be identified with by other women. In constructing her exclusion from traditional narratives as commonly occurring, she locates the responsibility for her alienation in gendered conventions themselves rather than her own inability to conform. Mnemonic narratives not only communicate the experiences but are constructed in particular ways to serve particular interests and to promote specific ways of understanding both the past and present.

The memory of gendered experience cannot be considered in isolation from other social and cultural factors which impact on the experience of women. Maya has a particular ethnically inflected experience of femininity in terms of the expectations and assumptions that surround the performance of gender which is evident in her choice of a fairytale narrative motif to use in opposition to her own life course. The fairytale motif of feminine success being defined by marriage to a suitable (wealthy or high status) man transcends cultural divisions and is ubiquitous in both British and Asian culture. The use of this trans-cultural motif and her resistance to it can in part be seen as a response to her alienation from the traditional expectations existing in both British and Asian culture as she was a teenaged single mother and was brought up in a single parent family herself. Her gendered identity is therefore in conflict with the cultural expectations of her ethnic background and her nationality.

Maya's evasion of cultural specificity also highlights the extent to which gendered transgressions can disrupt cultural affiliations though the very construction of mnemonic narratives. It is echoed more broadly throughout the interview as she makes absolutely no reference to herself as British Asian or her experience as such. This contrasts with all of the other interviews with Asian and British Asian women who systematically made specific reference to the importance of their ethnically inflected experience as a woman.

In contrast to Maya's use of the concept of a *'typical girl'*, which attempts to universalise her feminine experience, Rani talks at length about her specifically British Indian experience and at many points in the narrative, ethnic and gendered perspectives converge, highlighting the plurality of ways women's memories can be gendered by virtue of alternative cultural experiences of gender:

> **Rani**: *If you're coming from like that background of migration, like migrating from one country to another. Its not kind of considered a....you're kind of pushed towards kind of doctors or something that's considered as more professional, y'know lawyers, accountants. Those kind of, I call them rigid kind of roles. Me being the way I am is quite different in that sense, because no. I really thought, I'm theatrical, that's just me, that's my character. No-one can take that away from me, so if I want to be famous and be an actress or a dancer, um no, they can't take that away from me. So that was something I used to kind of, always....why can't an Indian girl do a dance in their twenties and their thirties.*

Rani suggests that familial experiences of migration that resonate throughout British Asian culture more widely, compound gendered social expectations. A result of this can be seen in the content of Rani's mnemonic narrative which positions the intersection of ethnicity and gender as a restrictive social force in her own experiences. Restrictions imposed on Rani's desired career by traditional resistance to grown women engaging in bodily performance are multiplied by the paramount importance placed on upward social mobility which has emerged from the poverty and potential discrimination encountered by migrating families. A heightened importance of maintaining connections with the culture of homeland, may also intensify the importance of cultural memory and the ways in which this is performed through cultural practices and conventions, such as the strict regulation of traditional dance.

Dancing for Rani is way of experiencing cultural memory. Pallabi Chakrvorty (2004) describes Indian dance as a way in which 'cultural memory is evoked through bodily practices' (p.14). Such memory is not just individually imagined by Rani; it also enables her to actively participate in traditional Indian culture and so articulate her identity as a British Asian woman. It is paradoxical that it is Indian cultural convention regarding age restrictions on women's participation in dance that aims to prevent her from engaging in it. Rani is caught in tension between dance as it is traditionally performed in India, and Indian dance as a site of embodied cultural memory performed under the changed cultural conditions of contemporary Britain. Unsurprisingly, this is captured in her deeply ambivalent attitude towards her gendered experience of migration and its legacy.

In response to the heightening conflict between prescribed gender roles Rani encounters in the negotiation of Indian and British culture, she reverts to a mnemonic account that emphasises essential characteristics of her self, rooted in her personal past, which she constructs as independent of these socio-cultural pressures. In constructing a transcendent autonomous sense of self, characterised by her theatricality, she imaginatively protects herself

from the gendered social pressures she faces and legitimates her particular desires and life path. She also goes some way to absolving herself of responsibility for the rejection of these pressures in her naturalisation of an essential character. In doing so she neither invokes a clear-cut rejection of the socio-cultural values that have alienated her, nor does she internalise their rejection of her which would result in compromising her own sense of self. Rather the conflict between her own desires and cultural conventions is constructed as inevitable, naturally occurring but more importantly an isolated instance which does not necessitate a wholesale disregard for British Indian culture more generally. The retreat into the discourse of an essentialised character can be viewed as a system of managing the conflict between personal desires and conflicting cultural tensions.

The older Asian participants do not articulate such deeply felt tensions in cultural gender expectations as the younger British Asian women. Although not always implicitly referred to, the gendered social roles they fulfilled in their past was embedded in their mnemonic narrative, highlighting the centrality of gender in the retrospective construction of self.

> **Mukta**: *Umm, we were a big family. When I got married in Mombassa, my husband had four brothers. He is the fifth one. Four brothers and three sisters. Everybody was married except my younger brother in law, but we all used to eat together. It was very, very nice. Very enjoyable. And I stayed there for about five and a half years. And they are the most beautiful years of my life.*
>
> **Lalan**: *That memory and every two or three months we went to Entebbe in a very big garden for a picnic, all the family, nearly thirty five people of the family, all eating together.*

The emphasis on eating together highlights the centrality of domesticity for these women (which was echoed elsewhere in the interviews) and the value they place on that role in determining their sense of self, not only then, but now in the present construction of their memories. There is little sense that the gendered expectations of them as young women have been in any way invalidated over time. They remain serviceable as explanatory accounts of their personal and social selves. This contrasts sharply with Rani's feelings of frustration at the disparity between traditional gendered cultural expectations, the opportunities she has open to her given her contemporary socio-cultural context and her own desires. It also contrasts with the ambivalence of Susan's narration of her entry into married life despite the closeness in age between Susan, Lalan and Mukta, suggesting that there has been a more radical and far-reaching popular re-assessment of gendered roles by western women, meaning that older women are increasingly re-evaluating their early gendered experiences with

growing disaffection. Generational orientations to gender are highly culturally specific and this is reflected in the nature and communication of memories.

The plural ways in which gender and ethnic experience converge at different times and under different social conditions, shown in the differences between Rani, Susan, Mukta and Lalan's accounts, echoes Selma Leydesdorff's (1999) call for oral histories to be understood not in terms of a homogenised notion of gender, but of *genders* which exist in different historical, social and cultural contexts. As Alice Ludvig (2006) suggests, the ways in which social variables intersect at any given time is almost infinitely variable and multiply contingent and as such, there is no possibility of elaborating a universalising theory on the ways in which age, gender and ethnicity act on one another. What is possible and indeed desirable, is identifying in a given geographical and historical moment, the nature of those interactions and maintaining a constant sensitivity to their interrelationships. This emphasises the importance of considering the relationship between gender and memory as more than the recall of the female experiences of the past. Gender must be analysed in terms of its structuring role in original experiences and in the act of remembering itself whilst always remaining in view of other key dimensions of social experience. Remembering is not merely reflective of a gendered identity but fundamentally constitutive of it.

For all the women involved in the study there was a profound sense that the past provided a resource for the generation of gender identities in the present. Through the ways in which the past as a mnemonic resource is inflected with the politics of gender, the women are able to construct, not static or fixed conceptions of themselves as gendered agents, but senses of self which are both flexible and fluid formulations, speaking to the historical and cultural moments from which they are remembering, and durable and continuous narratives that allow self-identification across time. The role of remembering in creating a gendered sense of self primarily involved the negotiation of gender in personal pasts, generating a unique identity within the shared subject position of womanhood.

Rani's extensive and reflexive talk about memories of herself as seen previously, highlight the importance of remembering in generating a specifically gendered contemporary sense of self which actively structures agency in the present. In her further commentary regarding her desire to be a dancer and how this exists in tension with 'typical thinking', she is able to construct a very particular gendered identity for herself:

> **Rani**: *When I was younger I did think 'yes I'm going to be famous when I get older'. So why is it then that a normal girl, living in a normal society*

> *would not be able to pursue that. And I knew then that I was very different from the rest of the kind of...typical thinking if you want to call it... I like to think that there is another door there that is waiting to be, and I'd like to mould myself to the music side of things. I know I will be content once I do that. Like I was saying to you, I would like to start singing lessons and dancing lessons as well.*

Rani's gendered identity is characterised by the reciprocal tension with the conventions of everyday life; she is at once 'living in a normal society' and 'different from the typical thinking'. Her sense of self is then one of being simultaneously inside and outside a shared notion of femininity, and therefore gives licence for particular actions in the present: both cultural participation and rebellion.

Jenny too uses memories of girlhood and adolescent experience to construct her current gendered self:

> **Jenny**: *I used to just read a lot and I studied history and art, I think you probably pick up a lot from that. But I do think I was more political about it. A lot of it was my own feeling that I was quite smart and not really acknowledged for that because I was female and that made me very angry. And I just remember that feeling, so that's where it all came from. So I'm guessing it was something I sought out as time went on, um why were people thinking that way and how do I change that and be different. And I suppose that took a long time to be able to do that and now that I'm older I'm comfortable with that, because I'm more confident in a way. So umm, and maybe that's why I'm prepared to be more feminine now than I was then. I don't need to prove something so much. I'm quite happy to, y'know I have a lot of hobbies that are traditionally male like riding a motorbike and things like that and I have no issues about that.*

Her experience as a girl or adolescent is again used to explain and legitimate her contemporary sense of femininity and provide a narrative justification for her gendered performances. Although locating formative experience in formal education rather than in ethnically derived culture, Jenny articulates a dual sense of belonging and otherness in relation to social norms of womanhood in a similar way to Rani. For Jenny it is through the process of reconciliation that she constructs her contemporary gender identity. In establishing causal relationships between past and present, Jenny is able to construct frameworks for action and a systematic way of participating in a gendered social environment.

Rani and Jenny are talking very specifically about their individual sense of gendered identity and personal agency. But in moving beyond these extracts, it becomes clear that the participants develop a personal sense of themselves in relation to a wider understanding of a

shared gendered past, rather than their own experience being their only point of reference. The nature and deployment of this shared past is by no means universal, but is nevertheless a fundamental aspect of the way in which women remember as a way of making sense of the past and themselves within it. It is in the reciprocal movement between individual lives and historical time that remembering becomes an action which enables the construction of individual selves and gendered social meaning.

A 'Women's Past'?

> **Lillian**: *I think women perhaps are very aware of where they are at the moment and I guess you only get an awareness of that because you know the things that have gone on before.*

Women are uniquely positioned at a nexus of public and private narratives and at this 'juncture where the individual and social come together' (Hirsch and Smith, 2002: 7), an explicitly cultural gendered memory is called into being. Gender as a specific and plural subject position mediates the relationship women have with broader historical, socio-cultural narratives of womanhood and more intimate narratives of experience, which converge and cross over one another to generate a coherently gendered relationship with the past which is both reflective and constitutive of female experience.

Public narratives of the past communicate to women in specific ways. 'Great man' histories, despite the academic criticism they have received, retain a privileged niche in popular cultural texts and narratives. Recent film releases, including *Alexander* (2004) and *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), illustrate the resilience and continued popularity of these formulations of the past. Themes of male heroism, battle and nation, combined with the limited visibility of women in these accounts of the past (fictional or otherwise), go some way to explaining the near-complete absence of reference to them in conversations with participants. Their irrelevance to women's understandings of the past is striking. So where are women looking for the broad historical markers that can be used to contrast, legitimate, contextualise or make fuller sense of their personal experiences?

Contemporary women's political and historical location is one which intimately relates to both content and the form of remembering. With the fight for suffrage and political emancipation being increasingly talked about as 'history' and second wave feminism becoming increasingly temporally distant, notions of post-feminism are emerging, infusing gender identity with a new set of imperatives. Many participants in the research felt that

narratives of women's development as a social group were intimately connected to their own personal mnemonic narratives.

The women were engaging with a clear if not homogenous collective memory of women's development over time, utilising ideas of feminism and progress as a mnemonic repository on which they could draw in a uniquely gendered way. The emerging remembrances of the participants do not result in a narrative of 'women's history' as unbridled success and freedom, nor is it even a unified narrative in any conventional sense. The commonality between women's relationship to a cluster of narratives forming a sense of a specifically feminine past is based on the recognition of a feminine subject position, and despite interpellation by other variables of ethnicity, class and age, it is the grounding condition for shared dialogue, rather than a fixed set of shared meanings.

Francesca: *If you'd been brought up in the 1950s, just because it happened to be 1960 something you didn't change your attitudes about things. The pill wasn't available to lots and lots of people. Certainly wasn't available freely to unmarried girls in the 60s. So the image that's portrayed of swinging London, well it might have been swinging for a small percentage of the population but it's been glamorised and really put out of proportion.*

Maya: *There's nothing that jumps out as being really, really important. Just in general. I think the first women to conquer certain things. Stuff like that, that would be quite, first captain or first pilot or what have you.*

Lillian: *I mean you went through a time with comedy where you had to be terribly politically correct which was probably when I was at college and was probably the time when we were getting into feminism being terribly politically correct and I feel we've moved through that now. We had a book in our book club the Vagina Monologues and I just read the first bit of it and it really put me off it because it's really feminist and I though 'oh dear what's happened to me' but I just thought, this is just you know I don't know 'what would your vagina wear' and I just thought 'oh I can't be doing with this' and it was all about how empowered women can be you know and all this sort of thing and it just didn't speak to me any more, and I just thought 'nah I'm not into this'. So maybe I'm a post-feminist generation, something like that.*

Lillian: *I think there were some personal issues with her but I think a lot of it was the fact that she very much took on board the kind of role of 1950s wife and mother and she was very. I think she perhaps didn't express herself enough. Y'know she didn't kind of stamp her own personality on things. I mean she had her own business and she did quite a lot of things, but I think she did kind of perhaps, she was perhaps slightly subservient to my dad and the way he thought. And I think that partly her as well because not all women were like that in the 1950s but I think it was a role you could be confined into quite easily because of what was expected of them.*

Jenny: *I think women have done a lot of self-analysing and really have had a revolution and there's a lot more to do. I suppose feminism was quite theoretical when I was younger, now its not. Its not, its uh, it's a thing that moves. You can't say this is feminism, this is what I believe, all the time, every time. Y'know it changes. I certainly used to think that men and women are equal in every way and now I think they're equal but different. And I find that easier to acknowledge now than I did when I was quite young. I think it was just a reaction against...umm, so it's not such an issue now... I don't generally use the word feminism because the word feminism has a bad name. Although I am still a feminist. I still believe the same and I'm actually a bit clearer about it now. I still hate page three, y'know... I'm quite happy to, y'know I have a lot of hobbies that are traditionally male like riding a motorbike and things like that and I have no issues about that. I'm not proving a point, whereas when I was younger I was proving a point. I actually think it's got worse again. It's become acceptable again. I think that's what I'm saying about feminism now. There's kind of this idea that women can do that sort of thing and that's fine and I actually don't think that's fine. I still feel, and maybe this is slightly old-fashioned, but I feel that is still subverting women, whether women agree to do it or not, because of the way it makes other women feel, women as a collective group, it's seen in a certain way. And it still makes me angry.*

Abha: *I can remember, just recently the elections came, and I could vote and in a way I thought 'I can't be bothered'. And every single girl looked at me and said 'Abha, women sacrificed their bras and their lives for you' and I was like 'ok'. And every lesson I went to every women teacher was like 'Abha, believe me, so much has changed. The feminists, like they worked so hard for you to get a vote'. Their views and how much they've fought for us y'know?*

From this collection of extracts it is clear that the politics of women's historical and socio-cultural position are a central aspect of the participant's collective memory. The majority of the women either explicitly or implicitly invoke a past where women have been limited in their freedoms or subjugated in some way, not in individual experiential terms but as a gendered collective, communicating and bringing into being a shared investment in particular aspects of the past. Although Maya showed very little interest in broad public narratives of the past, she nevertheless identified explicitly gendered aspects of the past which hold particular importance for her. In providing no explanation or extrapolation, she made the assumption that I would know why these things are important to her and her rather general reference to 'stuff like that' suggests that there is a well-known repository of mnemonic accounts that are relevant to women and that these narratives of female 'history' are deeply embedded ways in which women relate to and make sense of the public past.

There was an unmistakable assumption in all of the interviews of a shared understanding between myself and the participants surrounding issues of reproductive health,

career and domestic issues. For example, Francesca assumed that I would be aware of the fundamental role of the pill in achieving sexual and reproductive independence for women. This also signals that shared collective memory contributes to the productivity of contexts of communication and enriches the co-authored meaning generated in an in-depth interview.

The idea of a collective women's memory was one of the macro-narratives running through many of the interviews, showing that gender affiliations are tied in a formative relationship to the content of one's public as well as private mnemonic repositories. The narratives provided by the women are not solely of utopian progress but self-consciously referred to uneven and contingent progress, shaped by class, geographical and historical location. Francesca's comment on the limited availability of the contraceptive pill suggests that the existence of a women's collective memory is not dependent on a homogenous female experience but is a recognition of key areas that are central to women's social development such as control over reproductive health.

The idea of a shared gendered subjectivity as a premise for a specifically feminine form of temporal knowledge and communication was not only in evidence in the talk between the interviewees and me as an interviewer. Rachel talked extensively about the use of feminine experience, communicated in the form of mnemonic narratives, to jointly solve or come to terms with other women's problems.

> **Rachel**: *I've actually got my eldest son's girlfriend living with me at the moment. For her, she's unfortunately had a very, very, very difficult life bless her, she's a lovely person but has a very negative outlook on life, mainly because of all her emotional problems that she has. But her staying with me these past five months, for her has been a huge learning curve because she's actually learning from my experiences and what I've been through because I'm a woman and on that basis, we talk and talk and talk and relate from our own experiences and put them together. She was going through a particularly bad time, not dealing with something, always being particularly negative. What women do is they relate. 'I know it might seem bad now but..'. Then you tend to fill in with one of your own experiences so if she's going through something. But she's not with me, like at the moment she in Turkey on holiday with her mum, she has a very difficult relationship with her mum, she's already gone prepared because we had this very intense session of talking to her about how she's going to deal with things, both from her own already experiences and from my life experiences on how to deal with it. So on a personal level you do use experiences to try and use them to help other women to manage relationships.*

Rachel's commentary highlights the utility and future-oriented nature of remembering in an explicitly gendered way, and the level of importance women place on a shared gendered

subject position in the context of the remembering process as a way of making sense of experience. It signals that women's memory is formed and reformed in the context of gendered communication, rather than gendering being performed only at the point of the original experience. This is necessarily an interpersonal and interdependent event rather than occurring in isolation.

Specific to narratives of women's development which are often characterised as accounts of the feminist movement, is its accommodation of ambivalence and co-presence. Lillian situates herself as having moved through feminism to reach a new post-feminist era. This is not narrated in terms of a linear history of feminism that moves from the suffragettes, through the so-called 'sexual revolution' and into an egalitarian utopia. It is a narrative that refuses to irretrievably tie stages of women's development to particular time periods and rather links it to the life-stages of the remembering individual, permitting the co-presence of differently situated gendered experiences. While Lillian herself may be experiencing a post-feminist disconnection from traditional tenets of the feminist movement, she acknowledges that other women of different circumstances may find this approach to femininity and female experience more relevant. This is reinforced in Jenny's narrative, suggesting that her relationship to a women's collective memory is formulated and reformulated, altering her conceptualisation of it, and position to it, over and across time. Such an orientation to the past and to social remembering contrasts sharply with traditional masculine public structures of the past and associated forms of remembering, where linear progression and succession is prioritised (see Zerubavel, 2003 on historical continuity) and narratives are valued for their fixity. Here it is fluidity, responsiveness and contingency that is prioritised in mnemonic action.

Abha's extract emphasises that an orientation towards a specifically gendered narrative of the past is not necessarily gained independently through the private assessment of the past. Explicit pedagogical transmission is central to the perpetuation of this collective repository of gendered temporal narratives. Feminism as a project with a specific historical narrative does not naturally or consistently place itself in the collective memory of individual women. Its status emerges in the context of female relationships and is a mnemonic framework that has to be learned. The deliberately pedagogical transmission of this form of mnemonic repository goes some way to explaining the trans-generational nature of this loose consensus over the content of a collective women's past, if not in the detail of its meaning.

The existence of this collective memory in the accounts of the women highlights the importance of specific mnemonic frameworks not as abstract ways of understanding the past

but in their concrete inseparability from the present as ongoing frameworks of understanding. Abha and Jenny both emphasise the link between engaging with notions of a specifically female past and acting politically and socially in the present and future, using it as a motivation to engage in particular activities such as voting or undertaking particular hobbies, whilst Rachel highlights specifically feminine ways of communicating and articulating memory and their importance in order that progressive interpersonal meanings and frameworks of action can be generated.

Flexibility and the consequent resilience of an explicitly female collective memory can also be identified from the way in which the women participants articulate their memories and the gendered hallmarks these bear. Positive, negative and ambivalent responses are made to the labels feminist and feminism across the interviews. The disinclination to accept the 1960s-70s feminist project wholesale has been taken to signal a disengagement with a movement towards an egalitarian utopia and a more complicit role in patriarchal oppression (Faludi, 1992; McRobbie, 2004). However, by looking at the way women remember feminism, adaptation and flexibility seem a more adequate description than rejection or denial. For Jenny, abandoning the label feminist due to its pejorative associations has freed her to think with more clarity about her feelings towards a coherent attitude to femininity and the women's movement. Lillian remembers participation in theoretical debate and recalls stringent versions of feminism in a given temporal period of her life. It is one that in its entirety does not 'speak to' her current experience but nevertheless informs the way she understands her mother's life in comparison to her own in terms of her mother's unequal access to education and the burden of domestic expectations. A female mnemonic repository has to be malleable in order to respond effectively to the imperatives of the present, particularly where existing meta-narratives such as second wave feminism have become loaded with pejorative meanings and are seen by some women to have become abstracted from the primary concerns of women's everyday life.

The women's talk both responds to these new conditions and discursively negotiates them, generating new formulations of women's past and in doing so, provide new understandings of feminine experience itself. This is not to say these new formulations should be considered unproblematic. Abha's reference to the myth of 'bra-burning' highlights the pervasiveness of anti-feminist discourse. Although it is not recognised as such by Abha, it is frequently used to alienate and stereotype those labelling themselves 'feminist'. Lillian's political disengagement, while a useful re-orientation to a gendered past in her everyday life, is problematic in a wider sense for women's participation in the public sphere. The extract does show an element of confusion in coming to terms with her de-politicisation which

suggests that Lillian is not entirely comfortable with this shift. This discomfort alludes to her de-politicisation contingent upon her contemporary circumstances and therefore open to revision over time.

A gender-specific public mnemonic narrative has not emerged in isolation from masculine relationships with the past, in fact quite the opposite. A feminine sense of collective memory and the forms which it takes emerge from the relationship between the genders; the feminine cannot not exist without its masculine semantic partner. Maya's comments about key public aspects of the past highlights the intersection between the two. Despite signalling the centrality of explicitly feminine achievements, she discusses them in the very masculine form of 'great man' history resulting in the continued invisibility of the everyday aspects of the past in which women as historical actors have most frequently resided. Masculine and feminine remembering are therefore not easily divisible. Masculine relationships with the past, by virtue of their ubiquity, have a central role in shaping women's relations to the past, either in complicity, opposition or a complex negotiation of the two.

Individual women's remembering using conventional public 'histories' of collective female social development over time is a central component in the construction of personal mnemonic narratives. It serves as a central organising principle for the situation of contemporary experiences of femininity in terms of providing contrasts and similarities and frameworks for progress and decline, all of which can exist simultaneously as Lillian shows in her identification as a post-feminist alongside her description of progress from the 1950s which has given her educational and domestic freedoms not afforded to her mother. This form of remembering and the learning of it, allows a degree of consensus to exist over the development of conditions for women over time and the aspects of past developments which have been central to it (such as contraception or suffrage). Such consensus both facilitates communication and shared understandings between women and also provides recognisable points at which individual narratives can be interwoven with broader public narratives, permitting contestation and re-interpretation of the experiences surrounding those points of consensus.

A 'Women's Past'?

> **Maya**: *Different clothes, flares, boot leg, big chunky heels, mini skirts and that to me would be a different generation.*

It is not only the historical positioning of contemporary women in relation to the women's movement that impacts on the specific content of women's memories. The positioning of women in relation to political and economic structures over time as a particular type of consumer means that women are afforded radically different mnemonic resources. Winship (1987a) has tracked the construction of women as individual consumers in women's magazines from the 1950s. She highlights the dramatically increased centrality of sanctioned practices of consumption in what it means to be a woman and to successfully perform the feminine. In terms of content, the interview participants use consumption-as-memory to construct their life stories and broader historical changes and weave these two elements together in a narrative form, emphasising the importance of consumption as a mnemonic logic for women.

For Louise, the time at which she was in the most formative period of learning her gender (e.g. childhood and adolescence) coincided with a historical moment characterised by an intensification of the ethics of consumerism. This juncture of personal and historical in the late 1950s and early 1960s may go some way to explaining the marked role of emergent consumerism and its interrelation with gender in Louise's narrative:

> **Louise**: *Everything was loose and weighed up. Tea, everything.... They filled them and sat them up y'know? And everything was served from behind the counter y'know? Um and so the sixties, (pause) the things I remember about the 60s first and um, one of the big things was shopping changing. You know, the first supermarket? Gosh the first supermarket, now this is y'know real sort of how things changed, the first supermarket near us was in the old cinema... Suddenly C&As, gosh I remember C&A. C&As was a revelation 'cos you could go and buy a, a, frock for 19/11. And just lovely uh, everything suddenly seemed to be, it seemed as if the whole world was catering for me y'know. It was, it was, suddenly being a teenager was the right thing to be. And teenagers just didn't exist before then and, and suddenly there was the music and the clothes and (pause) everything!*

Louise highlights how gender and consumerism were interlaced, and in this historically specific interrelationship, a particular sense of period emerges. Louise's account constructs the delight of buying a new dress as a revelation, clearly deriving pleasure from the thrill of purchase and excess so lacking from earlier years, but behind this is a secondary pleasure in the construction of herself as a female teenager. The feelings of things 'being right' at this point in time (which continues in her narration of the 1960s throughout the interview) suggests this newly found consumerism enabled Louise to construct her self in ways that would not have been previously possible or at least more difficult in an earlier period. Her time of need for imaginative and material resources coincided with a historical moment where

these resources were becoming abundant for the first time, allowing her in effect to find a perfectly fitting off-the-peg gender performance. It later transpires in her description of her contemporary self as an 'anachronism', that this gendered self she revelled in, was not sustainable in changed historical conditions.

For Sarah, differences and continuities in consumption are a way of making sense of pre-experiential time periods. The 'swinging sixties' become inseparable from Biba dresses and shopping on Carnaby Street.

> **Sarah**: *But to go back then and to experience the culture and the posters and the images and you know, everything was, not everything but there was a lot of new stuff. And the clothes. It's got to be Carnaby Street. Swinging London. Again, that's probably a very nostalgic view because it probably wasn't quite like that but you know, I like to think about it like that... I always say to my parents 'I can't believe you didn't go to the festivals'. I mean, my dad did quite a lot of that but my mum, she said he wasn't really quite like that but then she's, y'know, got Biba dresses that she wore and y'know I think when they talk about it, some, a lot of the nostalgia is probably true.*

There is a characteristic division present in Sarah's talk about her mother and father, between men 'living' the 1960s and women 'wearing' it. In repeating this separation she is complicit in retrospectively removing women from the active public sphere and confining them to purely aesthetic roles. Despite this, her talk also distinguishes the present (and herself within it) from this division. This is clear in her claim that she would go to the festivals and participate in public culture. In this process of remembering and reformulating the past, she constructs consumption as a continuous female subject position between past and present through her desire to shop on Carnaby Street and wear her mother's Biba dress, but she also infuses the present imperatives of access to the public sphere into this remembrance, by linking this with a desire to go to the festivals and have a more active public role. She effectively draws on the potential of the past in formulating her desires for the future, but is able to be selective in the ways in which she does so, preventing any slippage into a regressive form of nostalgia. Nostalgia, as we've seen, can be forward looking and progressive.

The role of consumption in women's memories is central in many of the interviews, although a combination of the imperatives of consumerism with the performance of gender is not a smooth and homogenous fusion, proving exclusionary for many women. The stories told by other participants reveal difficulties in fulfilling this ideal role of the feminine consumer and the alternative mnemonic devices it has made necessary in reconciling the past and

present. Eva's less than affluent financial status compromised her ability to perform as a feminine consumer. Instead she suggests that imagination is more important in mothering than the capacity to purchase goods which are unnecessary for your children.

> **Eva**: *When they can, they [her children] come to see me and they ring me up from time to time. You build up um, um... I think that's something I always wanted to do is be a mother, so you build up a relationship from the time they're quite small. I don't think you need to spend a lot of money on them. People spend, buy all these fantastic, plastic toys that they don't need. Imagination is one of the [important] things, usually quite small things. I think it's an awful waste of money thinking that your love can buy them bigger and bigger things. I don't.*

> **Rachel**: *Because my husband is Indian, none of our families were talking to us, we were completely cut off from everybody and were very much on our own. He was unemployed at the time, he'd just lost a job. I was heavily pregnant and we had absolutely no money. We were living on benefits and we had no clothes for this new baby. And I stole clothes from the hospital. And when you think of things like that, that you've done, it was horrible at the time having to live through that. In those days as well, the experience at the time was awful, but in those days you would get social security every two weeks and every two weeks he smoked. Every two weeks when we got the social security cheque, his treat would be ten Benson and Hedges. Mine would be a Turkish delight, a can of mango crush and a bag of cheese and onion crisps and that would be it. That would be what kept you going. The rest of the time we struggled and sometimes my husband didn't eat because we couldn't afford to. Towards the end of the fortnight we were getting to the stage where we weren't eating in case, obviously we'd go out and buy all the baby food first and then you would just have to manage on what was left. And at the time it was awful, absolutely awful. But looking back on it, it was actually some of the happiest times that we had. I mean young people these days when they tell me they've got no money. They don't even know the meaning of the word. In that respect, although it was bad at the time, the memories are good, because you learnt from it. We were very much a team, very much a partnership, very much a couple trying to make a go of it, trying to hold it all together. So when you look back at it, they were actually, for that period, if you take it as a period as a whole, they were happy times when the children were very small. And we loved having a young family and we were very close and very much head over heals in love at that time. But on a day-to-day basis it was the hardest period ever of my life. So yeah, even bad memories are good memories because of what has been achieved since then or what it has forced you to go on to achieve.*

Eva actively constructs herself in opposition to a consumerist identity in order to maintain a positive account of her role as a mother, finding legitimation in struggle and the provision of care. Rachel finds it necessary to construct herself in opposition to the imperatives of consumerism in order to mnemonically construct herself as a successful wife and mother. It is interesting that in some cases this memory of alienation from consumption practices has to

tally with a subsequent entry into consumer culture as personal wealth has increased over time. In order to do this, Rachel, in contrast to Eva, discursively isolates this period of time from her current life and conditions. Where Eva talks in both the past and present tense about values that transcend her material conditions, Rachel ties her behaviours to conditions only talked about in the past tense and as a distinct period of her life which can only be so labelled in retrospect. This leaves her free to engage with a femininity more closely aligned with consumerism without compromising her experiences during the period of exclusion from consumer-based gender roles.

Remembering Home

The interviews revealed a very specific mnemonic relationship the women participants had with the notion of home as a domestic arena, both as it exists in memory and the ways in which memory is enacted within it. Although less prevalent in the interviews with younger women, central memories such as home-making, marriage and mothering, were often based in the domestic arena. Memories of waged labour and activities in the public domain did feature in many of the interviews but domestic labour was of particular importance as a structuring logic of women's remembered lives. Rani's introductory narrative of her life story highlights the forms this orientation to the private sphere takes in the participants' mnemonic narratives.

> **Rani:** *We all lived in one house before, so there's quite a lot of us as you can imagine. I would say the way we were raised is kind of, I don't know if it's a typical British Indian way of being raised where (pause) you've got everybody living in one house and everyone's kind of working hard to kind of make ends meet. Umm so we kind of raised a lot with that, like umm, I'm sure my sister would be able to tell you as well. I think we did live in kind of deprivation. Initially, to start off with....We didn't have things like a washing machine and things like that, I tell my friends now, all my English friends, they're like 'no, you didn't live like that'. We did live like that. We used to put all our clothes into like one bath and that's how we used to do it. And we all just used to like team effort and wash all the clothes so a lot of our childhood was kind of helping mum around the house. We didn't do any cooking. Mum did the main cooking. My sister was kind of the next support person if you want to call it. Umm and then people kind of like started marrying, so like my brother married and everybody's married in India. I'm like the one who's not married. And I've told them that I'm never going to get married. Just to kind of make sure that my doors don't, that the doors open too much. Umm and then everybody started kind of like, lived in one house and my brother kind of caught that house and we bought the house next door and then it was him and his wife and they were having a child so everybody slowly started separating.*

The importance of domesticity as a feature of Rani's remembering is clear from the sheer volume of her narrative devoted to it. Rani uses her position in a familial network and her role as a domestic agent to communicate to me, as an interviewer, who she is and how she became who she is. The reference to changes or developments in the private sphere of the home are used as temporal markers to illustrate the passing of time in a narrative of material progress and also to implicitly construct the gendered division of labour that marked her experience. This use of memory enables her not only to reflect the gendered division of labour in family life but position herself in relation to gendered socio-cultural roles. She constructs marriage as a key feature of domestic life using accounts of her brother's and other family members' marriages as examples. She goes on to reject the possibility of her getting married and hints that in doing so, she is attempting to prevent the wholesale attribution of traditional gender roles to her by other family members in her clear, yet somewhat awkward sentence: '*Just to kind of make sure that my doors don't, that the doors open too much*'. Her early experiences fix domestic labour and the private sphere as a significant part of her mnemonic narrative, but the self-conscious ways in which she uses these features allow her to subvert traditional notions of women's life patterns, showing how the negotiation between the social and the individual in the context of remembering can result in a critical and progressive mnemonic relationship with the past.

Several participants also engage in reflexive mnemonic talk about domestic life which frequently resulted in a voicing of ambiguities and tensions in the assumption of traditionally gendered labour divisions. Lillian for example highlights the fears and ambivalences involved in mothering:

> **Lillian:** *In terms of the children, yeah I think, remembering almost serves to remind you, to remind you that actually they're not with you for that long. And when you first have a child you think that, that's it. Y'know this huge amount of time kind of spans in front of you and sometimes you think 'oh no what have I done' (Laugh). But it goes incredibly fast. And people always say to you 'it goes really, really fast' and you think, 'oh yeah'.*

Although Lillian's comments work against a naturalisation of femininity and motherhood, she simultaneously reinforces her ultimate responsibility for childrearing in her use of the individual 'I' rather than referring to 'we' when talking about insecurities encountered in the process of having children. This highlights the ambiguous and pluralistic experiences in the private sphere, articulated and reconciled in women's mnemonic accounts. The intersection of the individual and the social in remembering women's experiences does not always produce progressive or radical 'counter-histories' or even counter-presents or -futures. It bears the

hallmarks of ambiguities, ambivalent juxtapositions and contradictions indicative of both the intersection of private and public accounts generally and more specifically, the conflicting narratives surrounding femininity and mothering circulating in the public domain in contemporary society, along with the constantly refocusing lens that these accounts provide for retrospectively viewing one's experiences of mothering. Women's relationships with the past cannot be considered exclusively as complicit or subversive but are rather a complex mediation between the constantly shifting public retrospections of gendered experience and lived experience of past and present.

Lillian also highlights the contingency of the experience of time. Before her children were born time passes with a uniform speed, punctuated by regular and structured life stages such as O-levels exams, A-level exams, university, travel, first job, engagement, marriage, which all mark relatively regular chunks of time, dividing up experience into manageable temporal units. Children and their lifespan which is anticipated to exceed a parent's own experience, instils fear into Lillian. There is no end to this job, this section of one's life. A whole new continuity of experience begins, where beginnings and endings are not marked out as they have been before. In the reality of Lillian's experience, this fear of an interminable and undifferentiated experience is unfounded, not because parenting is finite, but there is an accompanying shift in focus regarding the way time is measured. Rather than looking to one's own experience for temporal punctuation, the children's experience becomes the new marker of time; their birth, first word, first day at school, first partner and their first job. The rapid succession of these events brings a new sensation of velocity to the temporal experience of parenthood. This shift in focus is not without its tensions and requires active practical and symbolic work to maintain it:

> **Lillian**: *One thing my husband did actually, which I'm really pleased that he did do, cos he wanted to take a picture of each of the children every week for the first year. And we've got that, we've got like a close-up of their face and one of their whole body and that's throughout the whole year. So we've got fifty two pictures of them throughout their first year of their lives. And that's really nice actually and they really like it because you can really see how they change.*

Technologies of memory are used in this context to structure and legitimate this new temporal orientation. These textual creations not only reinforce the focus on children's experience as temporal markers in their undertaking as activities in the present, but the texts they generate allow temporal framework to be maintained through and across time.

Social Remembering

The networks of social relations women operate within has implications for their mnemonic practices. Women remember as colleagues, daughters, mothers, wives, partners or lovers, grandmothers and friends in all their cultural, age and class specific formations. When examined in its gendered context, memory and remembering often serve a purpose as well as being shaped by the gendered conditions it is undertaken. The reasons for remembering were often plural and complex in the women's conversations with me, both implicitly signalled through their talk or recognised and mused over by the participant. Although the act of remembering is often characterised as a moment of reflection on one's private past, remembering also occurs in other, more social acts and locations; in the context of domestic work, with music or photographs, in conversations or activities. In all of these instances, issues surrounding the reconciliation of past and present selves and of one's position within the past and present can be negotiated.

In her description of her life path as 'anachronistic', Louise highlights that remembering can have a role in coming to terms with one's historically grounded experience of femininity in the face of new meanings and experiences of contemporary women, navigating the changing nature of gender in a social context.

> **Louise:** *And I'm, uh, yes, I'm a complete anachronism really because I think I am just a, a stay-at-home wife and mother and general pillar of the community, you know I'm on the school county governor's association and I've always just been a volunteer, which has been extraordinary, especially the governors. So yes I do feel, as I say, like an anachronism, like there um...No regrets I don't think. No go on, um, about not having and through other people, but that's been, its been my choice. I've wanted to do it. it isn't so much a question of spending a lot of time thinking about the past, but being very much aware, um, especially seeing my children grow up, how much I am a product of my time and how that influences the way I deal with my grown up children and the advice I give my grown up children.*

Louise uses the process of remembering to come to terms with the disparity between the gendered performances of her past experience and the conventions of gendered behaviour in the present day. By keeping the two in view of one another, whilst emphasising the importance of historical context, she is able to sustain an investment in the life she has lived without compromising its validity, but is also able to recognise that women's lives are lived under different social pressures and conform to different norms in comparison to those she operated under in her youth. Her own experience cannot be continued forward as a template for that of her children.

Susan too uses personal and cultural memory interwoven to reconcile her feminine experience with that possible for young women today:

> **Susan**: *I feel I could have done a lot more with it [life]. But looking back I didn't do bad. I had a very good education, came from a reasonably poor background so I can't really grumble. But I do envy young people, because if they took the chance there's so many wonderful things to do and such lovely things to see too. We didn't start travelling until we were in our sixties so uh (pause). Things hurt now so we can't do as much as want.*

This recognition of changing social incarnations of gender integrated into mnemonic narratives of their own experience enables older women in particular to come to terms with paradoxical relationship between the intense personal significance of their past and its disconnection from contemporary gendered conventions. Remembering then, is not only a recalling of the past for these women, but a system of reconciling and dealing with social change and temporal difference.

Women's remembering does not only respond to social contexts of experience and action but also acts upon them. In particular, women have a key role in the social transmission of memory to their children and other family members in the forms of ways of life, traditions and familial knowledge. This was often cited as a central value of remembering as Lalan and Gayle's comments illustrate.

> **Interviewer**: *Could you explain to me what is important about thinking about the past?*
> **Lalan** (interpreter): *It's to provide your children with information, to help them in their decision making. When they become stuck anywhere, they can think 'our grandparents were like this so we can too'. This is what they did, so you can do it you know? A decision-making process.*
>
> **Gayle**: *I think it comes back to shaping who you are. You know if my children weren't aware, I don't want to overburden them with it but y'know you can't suddenly sit someone down when they're 13 and say 'oh by the way, you know your great grandma, your great grandfather and it's two generations that were murdered in Nazi Germany and there's still y'know, because of their religion, there are still parts of the world where they, they possibly wouldn't go. And also their grandmother, she lost her parents when she was 13 and that's quite (trails off)... And important y'know? And she is, she is a lovely lady but she hasn't had a happy life, and they've got to appreciate that about their grandmother and when they see pictures of people of, y'know, pictures of their great grandmother and great grandfather, they need to understand what's happened and that I think is a really important past, that they can't forget.*

As mothers, both women take seriously the responsibility of using memory to equip their children with narratives which will equip them to deal with their futures, whether those narratives take the form of practical advice or talk about the meaning of events significant to one's familial past. As Gayle's account demonstrates, this is not done lightly, as she suggests that too much memory can become a burden. Transmission here is not a simplistic conferral of information, it is the active mediation and communication of the meaning of the past. This role of women in the transmission of cultural and social memory to younger generations is sometimes extrapolated beyond the familial context. Meera for example talks of women's roles in transmitting cultural memory on the scale of whole cultures:

> **Meera** (interpreter): *She says the important thing about having these memories is to teach how to live life. The way we do things and the way we live, our experience, how to save money, just for the betterment of, so that each generation is better for the experiences of the previous generation.*

The words 'our' and 'we' refer to African-Asian culture as a whole and the reference to the next generation refers broadly to all young people within this culture. In generalising in this way, she sets up women's cultural role as the reproducer of cultural memory that can be utilised by African-Asian culture as a unified collective.

Performing the mnemonic role of a mother is not something that is seamlessly internalised and performed by all the participants. The process of constructing a familial memory was not as easy for some women to undertake as it was for others. Iris found considerable difficulty in performing the mnemonic role of a mother typified by Rachel and Meera.

> **Iris**: *It was dreadful. We talk more about him [her deceased husband/her daughter's father] now than we did, but we shut it off. Because that's how I was brought up. Our generation, your generation isn't like it, I was on about this to our Kel. We was brought up not to show feelings. You just don't show them at all. But it's got to come out sometime ain't it?*
> **Interviewer**: *Is it something you talk about with your daughters?*
> **Iris**: *No don't talk about it. Just started now, we'll mention their dad. But we haven't done [before] and he's been dead three year.*
> **Interviewer**: *Has that made it [husband's mental illness] difficult to talk about when your daughters were younger?*
> **Iris**: *Yes. But I were brought up like that. We didn't have many photos took or anything like that, I was just thinking this morning. When I were little, you didn't have photos took. And I did the same. And I wish to god I had of done. Y'know, just taken photos.*

Interviewer: *Do you think photos are important?*
Iris: *I do, don't you?*
Interviewer: *Yeah. Why's that?*
Iris: *Because you treasure em. They're a comfort ain't they? Yeah. I wished I'd took a lot, lot more. I really do.*
Interviewer: *Did that make you start taking more?*
Iris: *No. I still ain't got a camera. I did have one.*
Interviewer: *Do your daughters take a lot?*
Iris: *Yeah*
Interviewer: *Do they pass them on to you?*
Iris: *Yeah. But I'm a background person, not a front row person. There's people born followers and people born leaders. I'm a follower. Don't you think?... In life? Perhaps that's been drilled into me.*
Interviewer: *Is that something you see in the photographs?*
Iris: *Yeah. I think it's because I'm not very educated. My sisters got the brains and me brothers got the brains so I don't know what happened to me. I don't! Me mother didn't treat me the same as the other two. Y'know. I'd have loved to know but its too late in't it? Perhaps she couldn't bond and that were it ay? Cos she couldn't bond with my young'un, who's like me. My oldest girl, she spoilt her rotten. But why didn't I say something to me mother. But she was the matriarch wasn't she? Right though in't it? Y'bugger, I wouldn't now. I'd stick up to her now.*

Iris's experience of being raised in a context where remembering was not appropriate, particularly where an affective response may be elicited, has inhibited her ability to communicate her own memories to her daughters and the construction of familial mnemonic narratives in general. There is considerable pathos in this. The lack of photographic activity in her own childhood (alongside economic barriers) has resulted in a conspicuous absence of photographs, not only of her own childhood but also of her children's. She literally did not learn the conventions of photographic mnemonic activity. Perhaps most poignantly she has understood this to be a reflection on her own unworthiness to be photographed, alluded to in her description of herself as a 'background person'. She is clearly aware of the legitimacy that photographs confer on their subject, particularly when they are displayed, as later in the interviews she specifically denied putting up a picture of her mother, effectively negating her mother's significance to her as her mother did to her.

The scarcity of her photographs has concentrated and exacerbated their contemporary importance for her as she suggests that they provide comfort for her, alluding to the pleasure she takes in imagining herself as a 'front row person' in the context of viewing by virtue of being important enough to someone to be photographed. This is reiterated by her tearful gratitude for the photographic montage of her career as a cleaner given to her by the students at the university from which she has recently retired, which she displays in her lounge. Although she describes photographs as providing comfort, she simultaneously sees her own

diminished class, familial and educational status reflected back to her in the images. This sets up a tension in Iris's relationship to photographs and makes her engagement in photographic activity all the more problematic.

Women do not only act as guarantors of shared memory within the family. Sarah fulfils a key role in her relationship with her boyfriend of bringing their shared past into the present using music that is particularly relevant to events early in their relationship (see page?) Louise also talks about initiating mnemonic activities with her husband that refer to their shared past.

> **Louise:** *Often its, um, its, its, my husband and I we do it a lot, because as I say, we grew up half a mile apart so we did grow up in the same town, at the same time and we went to the same school, so we do have a common background and um, we do spark each other off. We went to Madeira at Easter. And we were sitting having a meal outside one evening and I said 'D'y'know I woke up this morning with this tune running through my head' and it was (pause, laugh) oh no, I've forgotten it. It was a little tune running through my head and I said 'I can't remember where it's from' And I said I think it's a 1950s musical. And then it was, was it Carousel or Oklahoma or was it South Pacific, and we narrowed it down. And um, and then we started talking about the films we went to see when we were children, before we knew each other y'know? And he was talking about his dad taking him to see all the westerns and my granny taking me to see Calamity Jane, and 'did you see Bambi?' and y'know. So its fun to do it with someone else who has the same memory pool.*

Memory refreshes and reinforces their shared past, not only in terms of things that they have physically done together, but as a shared repository of cultural reference. In narrating the use of these recollections, their shared past is brought into the present and made relevant to their relationship in the present and future. This memory work is of inestimable value and is rather sagely commented on by Louise later on in the interview in the comment 'I can never understand about men who leave their elderly wives for y'know, sort of a 25 year old bimbo. Cos what would you talk about?'.

Remembering is a contemporary activity which reconciles past performances of gender, in all their social and cultural specificity, with those of the present, developing a coherent narrative of the self as a gendered agent and enabling future action as such. This gendered action occurs in private reflection on personal experiences, in social interaction, and through interaction with the cultural environment. But most commonly memory is located in the complex oscillation between these dimensions. Each memory and its communicative enactment is produced through and in turn produces multiple accounts of gender and every

unique female subject position has particular demands upon and claims to the past. This is despite a recognition of gender in mnemonic narratives which serves to open points of commonality in women's remembering and relationships to the past, forming a basis for shared meaning, communication and action across seemingly insurmountable difference. This simultaneous difference and commonality is the hallmark of women's everyday remembering.

Chapter 8
Acts of Remembering.

As we have seen, the everyday activities of remembering and the experiences that they recall are inextricable from the politics of gender. But to what extent is gender as a mode of structuring and shaping our interactions with the past reified in and performed through our technological means of representing and communicating the past? Undoubtedly, there is a rich diversity of tools that we can use to interact with the past, anything from the language we speak to following a recipe handed down through a family, but some systems of representing the past have been invested with particular mnemonic importance. Photography and phonography are both renowned for their potency in connecting us with what-has-been and unsurprisingly, the participants talked extensively about the ways in which these technologies were used as a way of making sense of the past and the ways that the codes and conventions of these technologies structured the temporal possibilities on offer to women in their everyday life.

Photography as a Mnemonic Technology.

There is an abundant literature documenting the relations between gender and photography in public culture. Goffman (1979), Winship (1987b) and Pollack (1990) all, in various ways, examine the visual representation of women in public texts and tie these representations to the perpetuation of existing gender myths. Private photography has also come under the scrutiny of feminist research, highlighting its ties to the family as a socio-cultural institution. Liz Wells (2000) illustrates the historical evolution of photography as a gendered technology from the physical attributes of the early camera to the advertising discourse used by the Kodak company. From the initial emergence of personal photography, women were constructed as domestic creatures and in commercial discourse were afforded the proper responsibility for the representation of their family. Taking photographs was systematically linked to motherhood and the appropriate subject matter was increasingly looking inwards at domestic life (ibid.: 143). Alongside this ran an emphasis on recording only the positive aspects of family life, no matter how far from lived reality this may have been.

This situates women in a very specific relationship with photography as a mnemonic technology which necessarily impacts on the ways in which they interact with the past. For the participants who had their own nuclear family, the vast majority of their photographic activity revolved around documenting the lives of family members. Rachel talks extensively

about her systematic photographing of her three children and the fundamental importance that she attaches to this activity:

> **Rachel**: *I actually keep photograph albums from when we had the children from when the eldest was a baby . I have now up to eight albums and I catalogue them, write on them what children, where it was and when it was. And I write silly little comments on the bottom and we're up to eight or nine albums. And those albums the children will argue about over any other thing that they want when I'm not of this world. My eldest son maintains that he is having them because that he is the eldest, but it's really strange the way that the children feel about them, because the whole of their childhood is in there. It was a family joke that if the house was on fire, what would mum save and it would be the photo album. Cos there is so much in there, holidays, childhood, graduations all sorts of things and just like, this is our life.*

The link between photography and Rachel's construction of herself as a mother is clear. The statement that 'this is our life' contained in the albums is indicative of the centrality of motherhood to her sense of self, as there is no 'my' life as distinct from that of the family. It can also be seen as a wry reference to a famous television series celebrating the lives of celebrities, demonstrating the social and cultural acceptability of this mode of recording the past and importance it is allocated in constructing her sense of self. Photographing her children and systematically arranging the images allows Rachel to construct her own identity as a mother, as although she states that the albums are of the children, she often features in the images and where she does not she is still implicated as a mother through her role as author.

The fondness of her children for the albums serves to legitimate this role for Rachel. It is also notable that the reference to the images as documents or evidence of their lives in conjunction with their endurance through time, suggests Rachel is not only investing in the construction of her identity as mother at the point of viewing, but that the albums will serve to reaffirm it in the future when her children have left the family home and she herself is only a memory for them and herself as an active mother will also become a memory. Although her attachment to the albums is the subject of a family joke, it is not considered unusual to the extent where it transgresses socio-cultural norms and would be labelled 'weird' or deviant. This signals that it is deemed appropriate for 'mum' to construct the albums and have this level of investment in the family photographs.

Rachel has adopted and invested in the conventions of maternal photographic activity she undertakes, but not all of the respondents had such a straightforward relationship to photographic conventions. Ann in particular is ambivalent about the photographs she takes.

> **Ann**: *I like having, like if I go on holiday, I like to be able to know that I've been on holiday. Like I went to Rome and I literally have a whole film of just like all the different statues. You're like... you know you should be doing it, so you do it. Do y'know what I mean? Like 'there's another one and ah, there's another one'. Its like, 'why'?... I like to take, you know, a film when I go on holiday, just because everyone wants to know what it was like. And to preserve your memory I guess.*

Ann keenly feels the obligation to take photographs of special events such as the holiday she describes but she does so without any imaginative investment in the images. Ann took images whilst on holiday because she felt it was expected rather than out of any particular desire to do so. Her comment 'I guess' at the end of the extract suggests two things; firstly, she is reiterating conventional wisdom about photography; she does not *know* that they will preserve her memories of her holidays but only *guesses* so. Secondly, it indicates that although she has little imaginative investment or use for the images at this time, she anticipates that there may come a time when she does want to use them as *aides de memoire* or may refer to them in the process of communicating a coherent sense of self. Although active in constructing mnemonic resources in the form of photographs despite the fact that at the present time, they remain in the form of a symbolic repository rather than as coherent narratives generated in the process of communication. The mnemonic role of the images remains latent.

The reification of mnemonic practices in public institutions also marshals the way that women engage with the past. Gayle displays school photographs of her children despite disliking them.

> **Interviewer**: *How do you decide [which pictures to display]?*
> **Gayle**: *Well they're either from the album if they're little photo frames and we just take them out and put them in, or they're those awful school pictures which the kids have taken which unfortunately I have to put them round the house occasionally and then take them down.*

This highlights the extent to which photographic conventions are oriented towards the family and dictate the mnemonic activity of women. In saying she 'has' to display them there is an implicit assumption that there would be some sort of consequence if she did not. Perhaps their absence would indicate a failure to place appropriate significance on her children's education as part of their life narratives, or worse still, simply be read as a statement of her children's unimportance to her in more general terms.

As in Rachel's case, many women cited the viewing of photographs as a point of departure for collective storytelling in both familial and peer group contexts. In terms of the family this use of photography has been well established (see Middleton and Edwards, 1988)

Interviewer: *Do you look at those photos often?*
Abha: *I look at those photos when like family we haven't seen in a long time come round and we show them photos or sometimes we'll be just talking and we'll remember things and my dad's like 'we've got photos of that' and he'll pull it out... Dad likes to look at the photos. We'll just sit here and talk about it.... Sometimes when I'm sitting there with my family, they'll bring up a memory and it's something I've forgotten. And it's just so good re-living that memory because I've forgotten it.*

Sarah: *With the band that I've been in, its kind of gone a bit quiet now, buts it's been the same three core people for the last seven years playing music and we know each other very, very well. Practiced twice a week for the last seven years so those memories those memories are quite important and we'll often get photographs out and talk about gigs and nights out. And its really interesting cos one guy in the band, Dan, has got the most incredible memory of anyone I've ever met and he can remember what everyone was wearing. Y'know, what track list we played, what went wrong, who was there, he remembers everything, the time and the date. You know, it's fascinating and I just you know, like 'really, did we? Did I?' Its incredible.*

In both Abha's familial context and Sarah's peer-group setting, photographs are playing an important role in facilitating discussion of a shared past. Both Sarah and Abha highlight the pleasure of being reminded of something long forgotten, giving them an opportunity to discover aspects of their shared pasts anew. Abha's use of the prefix 'we' and Sarah's reference to 'core' band members highlight the role of this mnemonic activity in promoting group cohesion and reiterating membership in a bounded group, be it a particular family or a band. Both Abha and Sarah ground the groups in which the mnemonic activity in conducted in a longitudinal temporal context. Abha refers to family that hasn't been seen for 'a long time' and Sarah mentions that there has been a band in existence for seven years and so they know each other well. Both women are legitimating the mnemonic groups by constructing them as discrete units that endure through time, and through remembering, with images refreshing their importance in the present.

It is notable in both cases that neither Sarah nor Abha construct themselves as the central protagonist in the remembering activity of the group. Abha positions her father as the person most likely to get out family photographs and Sarah cites another man in the band as the authority on the band's collective past. When taken in conjunction with several of the other participant's comments such as 'my husband has a much better memory than me. Maybe you should have interviewed him' (Lillian), a definite gendered dynamic emerges in relation to the control of collective memory in mixed gender social groups such as some families, which attributes male member's authority over what is remembered and how. So

although many of the women retain a sense of responsibility for the construction of albums or collections of images, the action of using them in remembering was often deferred to another group member. Of course this was not always the case: as a single mother, Rachel retained autonomy over familial memory and the older Asian ladies' mnemonic activity related more closely to the dictates of religious ritual than to independent gendered roles within the family or peer group.

As well as using photographs to elicit memories of a shared past in the interests of group cohesion, photographs were used by Ann in the process of forming interpersonal relationships as a symbolic resource through which her past would be communicated and shared.

> **Ann**: *Because I moved around a lot, there was a lot that I had at home and I last looked at them when we had the whole, my boyfriend came over and we did the whole, sort of, 'oh my god, have a look at these', after a few drinks.*

By opening up her photograph collection, her boyfriend gains access to key moments of her past, defined as such by their visual representation and inclusion in a bounded collection of images. Where shared experiential memories are absent, this allows shared memories to be retrospectively forged. Ann describes the process of showing her boyfriend photographs of her past in a highly ritualised way as 'doing the whole...', suggesting that viewing them is a socially identifiable convention in the formation of a relationship and will be recognised as conferring a level of intimacy. The capacity that photography provides as a mnemonic technology for the sharing of one's past with a partner can be seen here as vitally important in the construction and sustenance of a relationship.

The activity of photographing family members was not, in most cases, divided along gender lines as had been anticipated in accordance with the considerable literature alluding to women's familial responsibility for family memory and its construction (i.e. West, 2000). Although Rachel took a lot of her family photographs, partially explained by the absence of a partner, many of the women did not. In comparison to the organisation and display of photographs, women rarely talked about the taking of photographs, suggesting that it was not an arena that many women had responsibility for. This appeared more marked the further through the life cycle the interviewee was situated, with elderly participants almost never talking about taking photographs. The participants in long-term heterosexual relationships frequently cited their partner as the main camera operative.

> **Interviewer**: *Are you a big picture taker?*
> **Gayle**: *Yes. Well, my husband is. He takes better pictures than me so he tends to take, oh yeah, he's just absolutely... we go on holiday and now we've got the digital camera we'll go on holiday and in a week we can take we used to take sort of three films which would be what? 90 plus? So it's quite typical to have y'know 200 pictures from a holiday.*

The participants frequently comment on their inability to take 'good' photographs (although by whose standards is never mentioned) and so rationalise or justify their exclusion from this activity.

The role of photographer is one which carries a privileged position in the recording of family life such as the ability to frame subjects in particular ways and from the photographer's own perspective. Exclusion, selection and manipulation are all tools at the photographer's disposal.

> **Louise**: *My husband um, uh (pause) likes taking photographs but he has been known to say to me could you move out of the way cos you're spoiling the view. Um so we've got lots of waterfalls, (laugh) and piles and piles of our photographs that we never sorted through.*

Louise's account of her husband's photographic practices go as far as to suggest that she herself is rendered invisible in the images. The frequent exclusion of women from the role of photographer suggests that the masculine gaze is therefore privileged in the mnemonic resources circulating within families.

Interestingly Rani describes the act of taking a photograph of a person as a way of ascribing them value or importance.

> **Rani**: *Photographs are usually happy memories and very rarely people take photos of sad memories. People. People in my life, that have meant...you know, I really value people.*

In this sense, some women are being systematically excluded from the process of ascribing mnemonic value to other individuals. This limits their role in not only participating in mnemonic activity but being restricted in the very construction of the network of familial relationships.

The lack of control many of the women have over the taking of photographs limits their input into narratives of familial memory. This is not to say that they have no command over what is available to be remembered. Abha highlights a tension in the process of creating

images in relation to her role as a photographic subject. She implicitly acknowledges a difference between images characterised by the complicity of a pose and those snapshots in which you as a subject are not complicit:

> **Abha**: *This is a photo of me and my cousin, and this was Diwali. We celebrate Diwali so we went to a restaurant so umm, this is after the food and we're all bored and chucking things at each other. I've never taken a....this is one of my cousins that means a lot to me but we realised we'd never taken a photo so we were messing around with the camera so we took his photo.... I guess we were posing for this. This, [the other photograph of herself as a child] it happened. You can tell because I'm not paying attention but these three are posing. I think it depends. In the photos I'm posing its like I'm trying to remember that, this is a time and a place. But a lot of the photos I think mark those when we're just doing something. Or we're messing around and someone's quickly caught it. To say look how stupid you look here.*

In the photographs where Abha is posing, she constructs herself as joint author of the image as she says that 'we took this photo' and that by posing she is deliberately 'trying' to remember. With regard to snapshots where she is caught unawares, she suggests the image is created to fulfil the photographers desire to remember and not her own. In comparison to her dynamic response to the image of her posing at Diwali, she gives an ambivalent response to the snapshot which borders on the negative. Rather than seeing the power of authorship as residing solely with the photographer, she posits representational authority with the complicity of the photographic subject. In doing so she suggests that the position of the photographic subject can be seen as a potential site of resistance, resulting in expanded possibilities for women to gain control of the photographic construction of mnemonic narratives despite their limited role as photographers. Her differing response to the two images confirms the importance placed on the exploitation of this authority for the utilisation of images in constructing accounts of the past.

Eva's discussion of her display of family photographs suggests that the appropriate use of the images, their organisation and display falls squarely within the domestic sphere, enabling women to exercise a significant degree of control of the shaping of mnemonic narratives of the family, even where the contexts of the photographs production are out of their control. Exclusions, inclusions and juxtapositions are done at their discretion.

> **Interviewer**: *Why did you choose to display the photos that way?*
> **Eva**: *I suppose that is it. They expect to be on the piano. Because, the one of this left hand side here in the frame is my uh, Molly. She graduated in business management and she gave me this. Of course I went to her graduation ceremony and everything and of course I got*

> *one of the pictures, and when she came she said 'why isn't my picture in a frame' y'know? So I said 'oh there's a frame up here if you want..'. (laugh) Rogues gallery up there.*

Mukta talks about having 'made' her family album, signalling her role as author, and Gayle's account of her framed photographs implicitly suggests that her control over domestic decoration extends to which photographs are displayed in the domestic space, where they are displayed and when particular pictures are put on show.

> **Mukta**: *And I got some uh, [brings out an A5 size album] all my three children are here. From when they graduated. I make this at home.*
>
> **Gayle**: *I've got a number of pictures that are all in frames which I keep behind the cabinet and occasionally and then I'll swap them round. So they are always in frames and the pictures of my, of my, my wedding day and my sister's wedding day, the kids when they were little, my husband's grandparents that he never met, sort of important things, and then occasionally...cos you don't want to look at the same ones all the time, but I will bring them out. And equally you don't want your house to be like full of pictures, so I just bring them out and I'll swap them round.*

These extracts suggest that where women have a reduced role in the creation of images, they are able to exert authority over their meaning through particular modes of circulation, organisation and exhibition. Particular narratives can be constructed in this way, such as that of academic achievement (Mukta) or familial cohesion (Gayle).

Mukta's narrative also highlights the self-interested nature of the display of photographs.

> **Mukta**: *It has been, as we discussed, at times when uh, you pick up things [family photographs] from the shelf and just get on looking at it. It's a nice feeling. A very, very nice feeling. And uh, we get on with our daily lives but these are the things to treasure, isn't it?*

These particular images in particular locations induce the generalised sensation of feeling good. This suggests that they resonate with Mukta's sense of family and her relation to those within it. In her control over domestic space she is able to display those images most relevant to her sense of self such as key events or people in her life. The images to which she referred were primarily graduation pictures of her children, illustrating that the display of their achievement was pleasurably congruous with her sense of herself as a successful mother. So alongside performing photographic mnemonic work for other family members, the gendered

activity of organising and displaying photographs contributes to the construction and maintenance of a continuous and coherent sense of self and self-achievement.

Gayle's system of domestic display also highlights the importance of photographic images as responsive to temporal needs. Gayle can change photographs to reflect the relationships which she wishes to depict and in doing so, be active in their constitution. This flexibility alludes to the usefulness of the photographic image in providing a degree of control of the communication of our pasts insofar as things can be made visible or invisible as and when we wish them to be. This also suggests that a resolutely fixed account of the past is not as useful as a flexible one which can respond to the pressures and desires of the present. Both coherence and flexibility are necessary to a useful and imaginatively productive relationship with the past and are permitted by photograph's existence as discrete visual texts.

Interestingly, one of the topics the women found most difficult to discuss in the interviews was why they liked particular images or why particular images were displayed over others. When Abha was asked a question of this sort, she answered in a way that, at first, seemed unintelligible:

> **Interviewer**: *Can you tell me a bit more about how you put your photographs up.*
> **Abha**: *Photos which I have put up like these ones, most of them are for the present. I put them in frames in my room or, like, you know, have this door and there's like the little square bit on top. That whole bit, I've got that door, so that whole square bit is covered in photos. So, I just, pictures that are pure to me, like pictures that I see that I absolutely love. Like, I love pictures, I have no idea why, but I just love it.*

She describes her display criteria as pictures that are 'for the present' and 'pure to her'. Firstly the concept of pictures being for the present suggests that the images must depict aspects of the past which are relevant to the present, such as images which depict key people with whom she has an ongoing relationship such as her cousin, who features frequently in her images and her narrative. The idea of the images being 'pure to her' suggests that the images must be congruent with an enduring sense of self, and in so doing do not contradict her own perception of who she is. Her use of the phrase 'absolutely love' may also be interpreted beyond its hyperbolic face value to uncover a potential reference to stability and fixity in her 'absolute' feelings about these images. This suggests that their intimate relation to her core sense of self is stable and can be used to imaginatively reinforce and legitimate her identity in times of uncertainty. These criteria of relevance and resonance, and the consequent

affirmation of self they provide, may go some way to explaining Mukta's generalised positivity to the images that she has on display.

In a slight difference to Mukta and Abha's display practices, Jenny had a sharp division between the images she chose to display and those she did not.

> **Interviewer**: *Can you tell me about any photographs you have?*
> **Jenny**: *I have very few and they're locked in drawers. They don't come out very often But I know they're there. I mean I've got some around but they're sort of recent things, yeah, they are memories, they're like birthdays or whatever, umm but they're only you know, a couple of years old and then I'll replace them with something more relevant.*
> **Interviewer**: *The photos that are in the drawers. When would be those few times you choose to get them out?*
> **Jenny**: *Actually I don't think I do look at them. I just need to know they're there. Can't throw them away.*
> **Interviewer**: *Can you explain that?*
> **Jenny**: *It's just certain very, very meaningful ones. I mean. I have no photos of myself (pause) they're all of other people that perhaps I don't know anymore. So sense it's just, its almost like you need to remember what they looked like. Because all the feelings in the actual...(pause) about the people, as I said, I can remember in my head and I feel I don't need to keep something of that. But it's what they looked like. I've got some letters as well that I've kept, certain letters, which I never read but I know them off by heart anyway, but I still need to have it. Just knowing its still there. Something about attachment.*
> **Interviewer**: *So it's more the being able to see them visually?*
> **Jenny**: *Yeah, yeah cos it's not really about the words that are written, it's about uh, the paper it's on. The letters are kind of visual. There's character in there.*

Like Mukta and Abha, Jenny chooses to display images that have a relevance to her contemporary sense of self. However, she also has a significant selection of images that she does not choose to display and does not show me in the course of the interview. These images appear to be judged on entirely different criteria from those on display. She talks specifically about 'needing' them which points to their fundamental importance to her, but she disconnects the compulsion to keep a visual representation of people from her past from her affective memories of those relationships. The images are treated as evidence, underlining their documentary status. The inability to throw them away suggests that her own feelings about that person would be compromised without an ability to visualise the individual as they were, the photograph so acting as a prop or anchor for her memories of her relationship with that person by virtue of its perceived evidential nature and it existence as a visual text.

Rachel then goes beyond the indexical status of the images to suggest that there is an important physicality to the relationship between the image and the person from the past.

Rather than prizing the representation inherent in the image, she notes the materiality of the image, as with the letters, to suggest that there is in fact something of that person latent in the material text of the photograph or letter itself. Her use of the word attachment compounds this physical nature of the relationship. What is also notable in Jenny's narrative is the implicit fear of the loss of memory. Being compelled to keep images, despite the discomfort they may induce, alludes to an anticipated shift in the desire, or need to remember when moving through the life cycle. It also suggests that there is a mistrust of one's own psychical memory as it may not be able to satisfy these future mnemonic needs.

Although the women's domestic display of photographs went largely unchallenged, participants did not have an entirely free reign in the photographic choices they made. The tension between the photographer and the organiser can compromise the resources available to women for making meaningful narratives for themselves, as is shown in Susan's account:

> **Interviewer**: *How do you choose which photographs to display?*
> **Susan**: *I've got one which I love which is the black and white one of the tree which a friend of mine, her daughter did, her son in law did. He was studying photography at university and he did the root of these with all wild flowers in black and white and that's one of my favourites. But I'm rather overwhelmed with photographs from my husband. Looking round at all his paintings all over the house. There's not much room for my stuff. All sorts of styles of things he did and I'm, apart from just the family, I'm quite happy to (pause) I want stick to...(silence).*

Although she is represented in terms of her familial role, there is literally no space for Susan to be considered in other settings or articulate alternative aspects of her identity in a visual form.

Despite the restrictions placed on her use of photographs in domestic space, Susan did use the context of the interview to construct alternative narratives in which to situate herself using photographs:

> **Susan**: *Well, you started by asking for a photograph. Obviously I came up with things that are present day like my family one and what have you, and I though it's not very interesting. But when I was about three or four, I had that one taken in an aeroplane on an excursion, it was about 1935 or something like that. And when I was 70 I flew one.*

She deliberately sets aside images which foreground her role as a wife or mother, preferring instead to emphasise her independent agency by refusing to adhere to gendered cultural expectations of her. She sets up a continuous and coherent sense of self between childhood

and later life by constructing continuities between past and present in the guise of a relationship with aeroplanes. She illustrates here that she is more than a mother or wife and demands to be seen in alternative ways. The interview as a communicative event must be understood as part of, rather than solely a reflection on, the process of mnemonically narrating experience and identity.

Cultural background played a considerable and particular role in the different ways that photographs were chosen for display. Abha and Rani both explicitly noted the premium placed on academic and career related achievements in British Asian families. This was cited by Rani as due to the difficulties of migration (such as poverty) specific to the experiences of their parent's generation.

> **Rani**: *It's a lot apparent in Indian culture. Not just Indian culture, in Asian culture in general. I think that comes from the deprivation as well. If you're coming from like that background of migration, like migrating from one country to another. It's not kind of considered a....you're kind of pushed towards kind of doctors or something that's considered as more professional, y'know lawyers, accountants. Those kind of, I call them rigid kind of roles.*

The older Asian participants experienced this in the most intense terms, as Meera and Lalan were forced to migrate from Africa in a wave of re-nationalisation; Mukta had to relocate to Britain following Kenyan independence, Meera was forced to flee Uganda under Idi Amin, and Lalan experienced forced migration from Tanzania, resulting in extreme poverty and traumatic resettlement. This experience of migration was constituted in the mnemonic work these women undertook using photographs. For example, aside from her wedding photograph, all of Mukta's photographs on display in her front room are of her children's graduations or in award ceremonies. She goes as far as to say that now they have left university that "*Recently there hasn't been any occasion to make any so...*", implying that photography is not for recording everyday life, but for achievements that she would want to be able to communicate to others. The experience of deprivation and loss results in specific uses of photography to construct new mnemonic narratives centred on explicit success and the achievement of status so virulently denied in previous times. This use contrasts Gayle's active dislike of her children's school photographs (see p.124) and Lillian's use of photography in recording the more mundane events in her children's lives such as the first snowfall or a birthday party:

> **Lillian**: *I guess, yeah, the ones we take at the moment tend to be centred around family life. So it's like kid's birthdays, holidays, when the snow comes.*

These mnemonic narratives are not premised on previous hardships, allowing success and achievement to remain implicit in the images, rather prioritising the explicit depiction of familial leisure and recreation in representational practices.

Notably, Abha and Rani, whilst noting the cultural importance of educational and vocational achievements, do not integrate representations of this into their personal photographic collections and displays. In Rani's case, this can be seen as symptomatic of an active rejection of these cultural imperatives. For Abha, the rejection is more ambiguous. Rather than an active refutation of the importance of these values, Abha's collection responds and reflects the importance of competing narratives of peer group cohesion and participation in a multicultural environment in her everyday life. Intersecting with this cultural motivation, is her limited control over official and institutional photography as she continues to live in the parental home and those images of her continued to be deemed her parent's property.

The nature of photography as a mnemonic technology provides the women with particular ways of re-evoking the past. Photographs were used as a key organising feature of mnemonic narratives in the sense that they helped to rationalise and limit experiences that were recalled, effectively allowing remembering to be selective and organised meaningful narratives rather than a constant and total stream of past experience brought into the present. Rani acknowledges this role explicitly.

> **Interviewer**: *What would make you want to look through your photos?*
> **Rani**: *Uh, memories. Just like happy memories. Photographs are usually happy memories and very rarely people take photos of sad memories. People. People in my life, that have meant...you know, I really value people. And just so, because obviously your mind gets cluttered with so many things as well.*

The photographs lift memories out from the continuous stream of experience, or what Rani calls the 'clutter' of her mind. Photographs aid the process of making sense of experience in that they flag up those parts of experience, replete with their meanings, that are relevant to an overall life narrative. We are then not continually forced to wade through the sum of our experience to date to make sense of the present.

This capacity of photographs to organise experience and in turn be organised as textual objects allowed many of the women to distinguish between different aspects of their lives and segregate the photographs they have into discrete narratives.

> **Rachel**: *When I was with my ex-boyfriend I had quite a few photographs of him that I really like that I kept with me, which I've actually still got in my diary. But I separated them, strangely enough from the ones of my children. The ones of my children are in an envelope whereas the ones of my ex are separate in the back of my diary. Strange that, you don't realise when you do things, but I have realised saying that, that I deliberately separated them out.*

Rachel separated the images of her with a partner from those of her with her children, imaginatively distinguishing between her role as a lover or partner and her role as a mother. Photography as a mnemonic technology allows women to segregate and make sense of different elements of their identity independently, creating discrete mnemonic resources. Rachel's role as a lover does not have to be subverted by her role as a mother as they can co-exist without having to be brought together into a wholly unified narrative of past experience, where tensions between the two would undoubtedly arise. This is particularly useful in Rachel's circumstances where she is juggling the roles of lover, single mother, friend and career woman all of which require her to draw on the past in different ways.

This form of material organisation was explicitly recognised as a specific type of imaginative and symbolic labour. Several women talk about organising photographs as an effort, indicating that it is thought of as domestic work rather than as a leisure activity.

> **Interviewer**: *What was that process of putting them into albums like? Was it done as you went along?*
> **Francesca**: *I did yeah. Sorry to say they haven't been done for the last five years. They may get done. You think you'll do it when you're not very well. But in fact when you're not very well, you're not up to doing it because you need to organise it and make decisions about things.*

> **Sarah**: *They [photographs] are more so [organised] now actually. I'm saying organised, they are organised in the sense that they're, a lot of them, are in albums but they're not chronologically organised or labelled or anything like that. Its something every time I put some away I think oh I really should label these but actually that's a bit too boring, I can't be bothered.*

The effort the rationalisation of photographic material requires suggests that creating coherent mnemonic narratives and adhering to familial and photographic conventions, although expected and required, women's experience is not easily marshalled into the conventional systems of representation.

The participant's talk raised key issues about the remembering of oneself using photographs. Many of the women spoke of their dislike in being photographed. Abha's extract illustrates the development of this dislike through adolescence.

> **Interviewer**: *Do you have lots of photos?*
> **Abha**: *Yeah. The ones of me are from age nothing to about eleven and then I stopped because I hated having photos (taken). If I've got a photo of myself it's with someone else. But my parents have loads and loads of pictures of me and my brother and when we were growing up.*

The consistent dissatisfaction with the image of oneself across time seems to be linked to a perception that liking images of oneself is vain. Rachel describes her confusion at seeing her boyfriend's picture of himself in his bedroom.

> **Rachel**: *The strangest thing. My boyfriend Terry, he's got a photograph of himself next to his bed. And I thought that was, I'd never have said it to him, we haven't been going out very long, I've known him a while, I've known him 18 months but we've only recently got it together. Yeah, he's got this photograph of himself next to his bed and I looked at it and I thought 'I would never have a photo of myself. I wouldn't like a photo of myself' you have photos of your children.*

This indicates that there is a certain level of discomfort with the overt representation of oneself as a photographic subject, reminiscent of historical notions of appropriate feminine 'modesty'. Rachel feels it would be more appropriate to display her children, prioritising the representation of her relation to others (as a carer) rather than an autonomous subject in her own right. Feminist theory suggests that women internalise the cultural practise of objectifying the female body and this can result in a preoccupation with the physical self (Beauvoir, 1952), which can elicit shame and anxiety (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997). In talking about her photographs, Mukta provides a clear example of this preoccupation:

> **Interviewer**: *How does it make you feel looking at these photographs?*
> **Mukta**: *I think great. I feel great. I want to forget everything, every bad memories. Just concentrate on them. I used to be very, very thin and uh, see this one when I got married [brings wedding photo A3 size down from opposite dresser], but because of the medicines I become anaemic every now and again....see this is when we got married. I was thin then. But when I was put on steroids, they make you put on weight. You try everything but... (silence).*

Discomfort with the explicit representation of oneself may go some way to explain the importance and pleasure women talked of in relation to music. Where remembering using a photograph objectifies the subject in the process of viewing the image, music retains a

continuous subjectivity, in that the listener of the music now is the listener of the music then and is not reified in the text. Such direct physical self-scrutiny as invited in the photographic gaze is not elicited by the listening ear. Francesca's narrative illustrates that self-objectification and the associated recognition of difference are absent in remembering with music and as a result, music elicits pleasurable remembering through the establishment of a continuous subjectivity between Francesca-as-remembered and the Francesca-in-the-present.

> **Francesca**: *I was also reminiscing about our old record player and then there's a new advert on the telly where the man is cuprinolling the fence. Have you seen it?*
> **Interviewer**: *Yes*
> **Francesca**: *It's the Laughing Policeman. The Laughing Policeman you see, as soon as that's on there, I am back in our front room with our record player and it was a very old record player. When we were given it, it was second-hand, it was pre-war. And along with the record player came pre-war records. Which as little children we didn't know that they weren't in fashion. We just thought this whole, they were songs you know, we had these songs so y'know, we learnt them. And one of them was the laughing policeman. And it was a wind-up one with steel needles that you had to put into, y'know until they got blunt. And it had two little doors that opened at the front. The record player was on the front, it was quite tall. And then there were two doors that opened where the sound came out and underneath there was a cabinet for the records. Along with all sorts of ancient records. 'It happened in Monteray a long time ago' (laugh) it was a nineteen thirties record but we didn't know you see and we had it in those fifties.*
> **Interviewer**: *What was that like when you heard that song, what was that feeling like*
> **Francesca**: *Oh, it amused no end. It amused me on several levels. It amused me cos it took me back to listening to that record but it also amused me to think that somebody resurrected it, and it amuses to think that I know it (laugh) it's really odd. I could sing it.*

This finding correlates with Huebner and Frederickson's (1999) discussion of gender differences in observer memories and field memories. Women reported negative emotions in relation to memories where they took on the perspective of the outside observer and were effectively engaged in self-objectification. More positive emotional responses were elicited regarding field memories where women remember the event as if they were reliving it.

Rani highlights the objectifying nature of the photographic image in her reference to images of herself in the third person:

> **Rani**: *I look at my pictures and think 'yeah, there's a lot of happy Rani's lurking about'.*

Here Rani's talk confirms that, despite the discomfort other participants feel in relation to the objectifying nature of the photographic image, for some women there is also a co-existing element of fascination with past images of themselves in this objectified form. Rani refers to the one picture of her as a baby, she says she thinks 'oh my god that's me', foregrounding the shock of that recognition which is integral to the co-presence of discontinuous temporal representations. She narrates the experience of simultaneous recognition and discontinuity by describing it as 'weird'. This weirdness brings together the fascination with the representation of a self now past and the poignancy of its irretrievability:

> **Rani**: *I think it's a catch 22. I think you look at it (pause) and I'm looking at that picture now and in a way I can't believe that's me because I feel that I've moved away from that person there. To me, when I look at that picture, umm it does make me feel quite sad actually.*

The participant's use of photographs to construct a sense of self did not always revolve around representations of their physical being. An effective avoidance of the harsh conflict of visual objectification was illustrated by Maya. While travelling around the world for a year, Maya treasured an image of a dog she had trained at home before she left.

> **Maya**: *[Shows photograph of her with another German Shepherd] This dog that lived down the street and before I went away we had a real, like strong relationship. We were really, really close. I spent a lot of time with him, walking him and training him and what have you, and as I was travelling I got a film developed from back home and this photograph came out of it. At the time I'd look at it every morning and say hello to him. I carried it with me, I was quite protective over it. So this is the photograph that means you know, a lot. Well it did when I was travelling, it still does. I keep it there [points to shelf] this is the only one that I um carry.*
> **Interviewer**: *Does it have the same meanings to you now as it did when you were travelling?*
> **Maya:** *Perhaps not so much because that picture would also remind me a lot of home and but now it just reminds me of him.*

The importance of the image is in part dependent on its depiction and symbolisation of a relationship that transcends her geographical location and the shifting perspectives associated with it. The desire to preserve some form of continuity in her sense of self before the geographical shift, during it and after it, can be in part inferred from the self-oriented nature of the image despite her physical absence from it. It does not show a relationship with another person, so the only human subjectivity it represents to her is her own. Her desired self-identification as a dog trainer which she talks about at length (and is currently trying to make a career of) is implicit in the image, suggesting that the image is not just of her or a dog but

enables her to situate herself as a dog trainer. Her protectiveness over the photographic image can be read as wanting also to protect her identity as a career dog trainer, highlighting its importance to her.

Significantly, for other interviewees who have had children and careers, self-constructions in photographs have been centrally concerned with motherhood. With Maya, this is not the case. The conventions of traditional familial photography that construct women as mothers in a familial context to the exclusion of other roles may be problematic for Maya as she was a teenage single mother and so alienated from the value-laden imagery of the nuclear family. This discomfort with traditional family imagery may be compounded by her mother's traumatic divorce during her own childhood, so explaining, at least in part, her reluctance to view images from that time. Utilising images such as that of her trained dog, which are not reliant on these conventional forms of self-representation, may enable Maya to construct a coherent and legitimate sense of self which is not centred on traditional and conservative notions of motherhood and family.

The experimental self-reflexive use of photography was not universal to all of the interviewees. Cultural and generational ways of understanding the image made for quite different mnemonic uses of photographs by the elderly interviewees, most markedly so in the elderly British Asian ladies.

> **Meera**: *This my mum.*
> **Meera** (Interpreter): *These have been on the wall so she sees them.*
> **Interviewer**: *Why do you have these ones on the wall?*
> **Meera** (Interpreter): *Just for her mum. Particularly to pay her respect every morning for the person that she is, for all the things that she's been taught and for all the guidance that she's been given, for all the care that her family took for her, to bring her into the world, educate, feed, what-not, in all their hardships. She pays respect to her mum and thanks her, everyday. And also, we [Hindu's]bow down to our elders, so even for her, she bows to her elders.*
>
> **Interviewer**: *Would it be alright to take a digital photograph of the photographs that you've shown me?*
> **Meera** (Interpreter): *What are you going to do with them afterwards*
> **Interviewer**: *I can delete them as soon as I have written up the fieldwork*
> **Meera** (Interpreter): *She feels that it is offensive if you take copies and throw them away because you are chucking away her mother.*

These exchanges illuminate the meanings that the older Asian participants draw from photograph images. Firstly, the images are treated as icons of the subjects which they depict. The context of the image is not mentioned and the focal point of meaning is the person which

the image depicts. The second exchange, where I come dangerously close to losing the trust of my participant, suggests that the representative relationship between the image and subject is perceived as so close that the image and the physically existent subject become blurred and the photograph is literally understood as the subject themselves. This was most closely replicated, although in less explicit terms, in Jenny's talk about her photographs in the locked drawer as having some material connection to the photographic subject. Jenny did however separate visualising the subject from her memories of her relationship to them (see excerpt on page 131), signalling that her investment in the iconic value was not as entrenched or continuous as Meera's.

This understanding of the photographic image makes Meera's ritual paying of respect to her mother possible. The mnemonic role of the image is literally to stand in for Meera's mother so she can direct her thanks for the life she has led. Where physical proximity is impossible, photography as a mnemonic technology allows those spatial and temporal boundaries to be overcome and cultural rituals to be sustained under these conditions. This ritualised thanks for one's life course also illustrates the role of mnemonic narratives in the sustenance of lived relationships. The Hindu convention of bowing to one's elders integrates mnemonic narratives and familial relationships, ritualises memory in the interests of cohesive familial and cultural identities. Meera's memories of her own life are indivisible from her memories of her mother and are performed through a prescribed cultural framework, bringing together the personal memory, familial memory and cultural memory in one mnemonic performance.

This iconic status of the photographic image was not compromised by the colouring or 'touching up' of images. After commenting on the vibrancy of her wedding pictures, Meera's interpreter suggested that it is likely that they would have been coloured in. This blurring of the boundaries between photography and other artistic forms of representation is discussed by David MacDougall (1992) in his study of Indian photography. He suggests that 'there is not the sharp dividing line that in the West separates photography from painting and other types of visual representation...That suggested to us a certain difference between an Indian view of the photograph as a kind of icon and our more indexical, Western idea of photography – our tendency to see photographs as an anecdotal' (p.96). In terms of cultural translocation, this suggests that traditional ways of understanding the image exist in changed cultural contexts but new uses of the images responding to those new contexts and experiences emerge such as Mukta's use of photography to track her children's educational success.

The ways in which photography is used in remembering is very much dependent on the way the images are embedded into existing frameworks of knowledge. Photographs from before a participant's lifetime or experiential memory raise particular epistemological issues regarding photograph's representational power.

> **Sonia**: *That's actually me [small child in photograph]. We're at Llandudno pier, and that's my dad and um, the inscription on the back says 1972 and that was in the May time and my dad actually got killed in the August the same year and I don't remember much about him all I've got is a few pictures from when I was little, and I remember stories that had been told by the family about him but I don't actually remember him, cos I was only 18 months when he got killed.*
> **Interviewer**: *Are those stories that get told important to you?*
> **Sonia**: *Yeah cos it makes me, um...I wasn't sad, I'm not sad, because of a loss, because I never knew him, but it makes me sad that I didn't ever know him sometimes. And the stories that my family tell um, are a way of knowing him really, and um, yeah. Having him as part of my life.*
> **Interviewer**: *Do you find that with photographs?*
> **Sonia**: *Yeah definitely...I think photographs are more personal to you aren't they, the people in them rather than music can remind you of times in your life but a picture with a person in it reminds you of them and where you were and what you were doing and how they fit in your life and how they were important to you.*

The photographic image provides Sonia with several key ways of forging a mnemonic relationship with her father. Firstly, the visual nature of the photographic record allows her to 'see' her father which is not possible through the telling of family myths alone. Her reference to photography as a way of 'knowing' her father highlights the cultural importance placed on visual forms of knowledge and the epistemological legitimacy associated with it. The images literally stand in for her memories of her father, fusing with family myths in order to fabricate valid and usable mnemonic narratives, despite not being experientially derived.

Secondly, the image of her as a child with her father allows her to imagine him as directly related to her own life; not just as a man but specifically as her father. Their visual co-presence literally allows her to have him 'as part of her life'. The context the image provides is also of use to Sonia in providing knowledge about her relationship with her father. She states that she cannot remember her father as she was only eighteen months old at his death, yet she suggests the images allow her to be reminded of what they were doing and how he fitted in to her life. The image provides scenes and settings for imagined memories to be staged and which provide a link between those mnemonic imaginings and a sense of the real, however tenuous that may be, legitimating those imaginings despite a dearth of experiential memory.

The viewing of photographs from beyond a participant's memory was not consistently part of such a deliberate attempt to generate useable accounts of the past in place of experiential memory.

> **Interviewer**: *Have you seen photographs going back beyond your nuclear family?*
> **Jenny**: *Yeah.*
> **Interviewer**: *How do you feel about those?*
> **Jenny**: *Yeah. Fascinated. When my grandma died, my mum had to go through all her stuff and she found some really old photographs of grandma from before I was born and she was an actress, so there was quite a lot of photos of her in her roles and that was really, really interesting. Um, yeah, sometimes. Not my grandmother so much because she looks more like my brother than me but sometimes when you see that family resemblance in an old photograph as well, I find that really interesting. Because you do kind of wonder where you come from and whose character traits you have. Those sorts of things. So yeah, there was quite a lot of that stuff that I've never seen before. Well my mums mum, they looked a lot alike although I don't look so much like them, but I have my mums gestures, hand gestures. And I can see that in these actress photos. Holding her arms out and things. Really amazing.*

> **Ann**: *To be fair, a lot of my parents are on slides, but I do know that my dad got out, the other week, photos of his real mum. His mum died in childbirth with him. That used to happen much more. My dads aunt has always said, a lot of people down around home think I look like my dad, but my dads families never really seen it, and my aunt says it's probably because I look like his mum. And he found these photos. Somehow they'd appeared. And that was quite interesting, looking at photos at photos of someone that I'd never seen and know nothing about. And you could see what they saw. I was like sat there thinking 'oh god, I can see myself in that'. I could see photos that I know have been taken of me, not necessarily I can't see myself in..., but I can see old photos of me in that photo. And that was really weird, really bizarre.*

Both Ann and Jenny use the images of relatives of whom they have no experiential memory in a process of providing a provenance for particular aspects of themselves from gestures to facial features. The extracts contain language which conveys their fascination with the images of relatives of whom they have no experiential memory. The source of this fascination is twofold. Firstly, they are fascinated by the images themselves. They experience a paradoxical sense of proximity and distance, intimacy and ignorance that is so very different from the normal context of private photographs in a close network of experientially grounded relationships. The photographs do not provide enough to satisfy the craving for knowledge because although their indexicality purports to provide a direct conduit to the past, they

actually tell very little about the person in the photograph; they are haphazardly inserted into a web of familial stories which can never provide the correlative amount of context required to accompany the almost intrusive intimacy of the image. This leads to the second source of fascination.

In attempting to make sense of the photographs Ann and Jenny both find continuities between themselves and the photographic subject to provide a source of personal knowledge of that person which cannot be derived from the image itself. This compounds their fascination by introducing familial traits that can transcend the life span and the finitude of the body itself. This reifies patterns of genetic inheritance in the photographic image itself. It adds to the experience of viewing, the shock of recognition so vividly described by Ann.

In allowing those people who can now only exist in memory, to become present in a visual form, the photographic image both provides mnemonic knowledge and resources and demands them. This paradox has the potential to create intense viewing experiences such as the ones previously described by Sonia, Jenny and Ann. These images and the experience of viewing them contrasts very strongly with those images that are seamlessly embedded into a life narrative, documenting continuities. This use of photography is akin to Marianne Hirsch's (1997) concept of postmemory which exists between personally experienced memory and public memory, drawing not on experience remembered but premised on 'imaginative investment and creation' (p.22). Familial knowledge, the visual capital of the photograph, and imaginative work, come together to make sense of a past that is neither experiential memory nor history . It is in this way that they contribute to the construction of the participant's mnemonic life narratives.

However, not all photographs of people long dead elicit this emotional response.

> **Eva**: *Well, I have my father's album from the first world war. He was out in Egypt a lot before he was gassed. But uh, so there are a lot of him in there. And pictures of me when they used to have a picture of the first Kodak camera, the old box brownie. They used to take pictures of me and they used to put them in the sun and into frames. He was always taking pictures but course I was only five when he died.*
> **Interviewer**: *Does it feel different looking at those pictures and looking at the ones on the piano?*
> **Eva**: *Well, its only a memory. Only a fleeting memory. I don't dwell on the past. You know, some people live in the past and I think it's a dangerous trap.*

Rather than negotiate the complex claims photographs make to permitting access to the past, Eva rejects this claim to ontological authority almost completely. The reference to not dwelling on the past suggests that this rejection is a deliberate one. She specifically cites that too much access to the past is a danger. However, Eva spends a great deal of time on genealogical investigation and other mnemonic activities, so it is not unreasonable to presume here that it is the specific form of access to her pre-experiential past that photographs purport to provide which is dangerous; becoming lost in that temporal paradox between that which is undeniably present, yet also irretrievably gone.

Photography is not only testament to familial disruptions or absences, it can be actively used to negotiate them in the present if deliberately designed to do so. The act of reifying a moment in time within a material text in some cases helps participants come to terms with change. Lillian talked about taking a lot of photographs as she prepared to leave university:

> **Interviewer**: *Are they taken at any particular times or of particular periods?*
> **Lillian**: *Umm, I guess. I'm trying to think. Me personally I've probably got...I think they'd be to mark events more than anything. I've got a whole load that I took just before I left university. I haven't got many throughout the kind of four years I was there but I've got loads that I took just before, because it's almost like I suddenly thought 'oh gosh, I'm leaving. I've got to take pictures of everything'. And we went round Lancaster and pictures of all our favourite places and things.*

Lillian clearly felt a strong compulsion to document her everyday life at university before she left but does not provide an explanation and later states that she very rarely looks at those images. This indicates that the act of taking the photographs was more useful then than now. The act of taking the images may have provided reassurance that although she would be geographically removed from it, she still had access to the life she had in Lancaster in an imaginative form. The fact that she never needed to draw on this resource she created matters little as it acted to ease the anxiety of anticipated dislocation in the act of image taking itself. However, in some cases the act of viewing an image was used to combat the discomforts of dislocation (see Maya on p.138).

This use of photography is particularly useful in families where migration has caused fragmentation of family groups or geographical dislocation.

> **Mukta**: *Yes. It's a nice thing to remember isn't it. I've got another uncle of mine that lives in Calgary. Now he came here after so many*

> *years and we had a get together because he couldn't go to everybody's house, so we had a get together. That's my mothers sister. So we went to meet them. That one is the uncle who came. Even at my uncle's house they were all living together.*
> **Interviewer**: *Do you think it's important to have photographs of events like these.*
> **Mukta**: *Oh yes, yes. Sometimes someone who has not been to the function still can see it. That is my uncle who came and that's his wife. She had a quadruple bypass. After she recovered from it they went to India to do some religious (pause) here are all the relatives. They are all my mother's side because that's my mother's brother. This one here, he is her son. He's in Solihull and he's a doctor. So many memories, isn't it?*

The images are not only testament to the ongoing existence of the group as a cohesive unit in terms of their depiction of co-presence, they also permit those who could not be there to have symbolic access to the shared memory of the event and to enable them to participate in the talk surrounding the event. For Mukta, the images of each individual in the image is iconic, allowing her to launch into a network of associated information about each person. She has a visual reference to which her knowledge can be anchored, investing that information with the iconic authority of the image.

The act of joint viewing can also prove a cohesive device, providing opportunities for shared accounts to be staged and negotiated, contributing to a larger repository of group memory:

> **Abha**: *People who are like 'I haven't seen you since you were a child' and they'll pull out the photos and say how different I look now or something like my birthday that just went, we took loads of photos say like everybody who comes round, we'll show them the birthday photos so I think, not that much. Probably every couple of months.... Weddings especially because we hardly see anybody at the moment because they all live in London or Africa or Portugal. Its just remembering things you forget.*

The role of photography was markedly different between women at different points in the life cycle. As young women Rani and Abha both showed significant reflexive use of photography; Rani in her reflections on images of herself as a child and the essential aspects of her personality latent in the images (see extracts on p.99 and p.137 which emerged out of the discussion of her childhood photograph) and Abha in her decoration of her personal space with photographs that are 'pure to her'. Alternatively Ann and Sarah see a potential use of photographs but one that is not yet required; their mnemonic potential is immanent in the image but yet to be called up. This division between the uses suggests that, when taken in conjunction with Abha and Rani's discussion of their specific historical and cultural

experience as British Asian young women, photography is being utilised as a mnemonic technology to negotiate British and Asian cultural conventions and generate a coherent cultural identity. Ann and Sarah have not experienced this requirement.

> **Abha**: *I was born here. Britain is part of my culture. It's half of who I am. I'm half British and I'm half Indian. And we talk about that a lot, people say Indian is who you truly are but I think both is what I truly am.*

Whether enacted or latent, the mnemonic uses of photography by the younger women were very much oriented around themselves: photographs were taken on the basis of their own desires to remember and viewed in response to their own needs. Even where Abha discusses family viewing, she singles out people's perceptions of her own bodily development in the meanings made from the images. The volume of pictures which they generated themselves varied, but images that they flagged up for discussion included images they had taken themselves or posed for alongside images that belonged to parental collections.

The participants in middle age who had started families, cited providing mnemonic resources for their children and the family as a unit as motivations for their photographic activity. Personal desires to reflect on a sense of self using photography are not talked of and the primary subject position in images is that of the mother, to the exclusion of other roles.

> **Lillian**: *The ones we take at the moment tend to be centred around family life. So it's like kid's birthdays, holidays, when the snow comes. At the time you're kind of thinking 'why are we taking more pictures of the snow' but I suppose later its nice to see how they've changed over the years...The kids look at them quite a lot actually. I don't remember if that's for any specific reason but if there's one lying around they'll pick it up and a have a good look through.*

> **Gayle**: *Y'know being a parent is actually quite a strong (pause) when I look at all my friends or most of my friends they're all parents and that's suddenly become a member of this group who've got kids and that's something that binds you in a group and the difference between people who've got kids and haven't got kids who are my age is actually quite marked....I think just your lifestyle is very, very different and how you choose to spend your time [when you have children]. And the fact that I think, certainly when I look to the people I work with who haven't got kids, they work and when they've finished work, there's no, no real responsibility. I was that once, you work all the hours God sends, you earn a lot of money but at the end of the day you spend a lot and you've got no responsibility. Its quite selfish in a way, lifestyle, in a nice way. But I think when you've got kids, you're constantly, you go home after a busy day's work and you've got to sort. I think there's a difference there*

These women's use of photography to construct mnemonic narratives for themselves is always conducted through the prism of motherhood, closely conforming to traditional photographic conventions. These women were also relatively prolific in their generation of images:

> **Gayle**: *it's quite typical to have y'know 200 pictures from a holiday. Because it's digital its fine, so you just... so normally for each holiday, god our house is full of photographs, we have one photo album for a holiday, which is probably what? A hundred, maybe two hundred sometimes.*

The prolific image-making was more marked than was seen in the younger participants and there was a considerably more limited reliance or interest in images from their parent's collection:

> **Interviewer**: *With the photo's your dad has, how do you feel about them?*
> **Rachel**: *That's an interesting point actually because I don't particularly take much interest in them, which is quite obvious because my dad is talking to my son about it.*

Of course, not all of the middle aged women were in traditional familial environments. Where this was the case, photographic usage frequently continued in the ways of the younger women, characterised by reflexive usages of images from diverse sources. However, all of the older participants had been a mother in a traditionally organised nuclear family but their use of photographs was again different to those women with young children. These older women were not prolific in their image generation.

> **Susan**: *I've got lots of photographs, yes. But I tend to restrict them now, um (pause) to events. If we go on holiday we probably tend to take only take about eight that might tell a story. So we tend to tell little stories and we keep the little things that we've done behind pictures, so we're not overwhelmed with photos. One time we took loads because I just took pictures of the trees and nature and things but I can't keep them. I think in some ways you begin to start to shading over with time, you don't want the bits around, you start, get rid but just keep a few key things. I think when we lost Nana she had left a lot of rubbish behind so we'll try and not leave too much rubbish.*

Susan consciously attempts to rationalise her photograph collection in two ways. Firstly she limits the volume of images that she has, so that meaningful narratives are not lost amidst a deluge of anecdotal or decontextualised images. She does this with a distinct view to a time when she will no longer be around to make sense of the images. This is particularly important for Susan who found sorting through her mother's photographs particularly traumatic and is

keen to avoid inflicting the same trauma on her children. Secondly, she aims to clarify the narrative form of the images. In making sure her pictures tell a coherent story, they are made both more communicable and enable her to ensure that they are understood in the way she intends. Her photographic activity continues to be conducted in the interests of providing her children (and grandchildren) with mnemonic resources, as with the middle aged participants, but she is preparing for a time when she herself will only be present in image form. The middle aged women's photographic subjects was the family unit as a whole as well as the children on their own. With the older women, they have begun to absent themselves from this role and rather construct themselves as part of a broader narrative of familial history.

Grace undertakes this in the form of genealogical enquiry and her situation of herself into a broader historical narrative.

> **Grace**: *My grandfather and his sister worked for royalty. My aunt was Queen Mary's housekeeper for 21 years. I wrote to get this officially and my mother said, I can always remember my mother used to say 'if you want to find anything out, start at the top'. So I wrote to her majesty, the Queen and I got a reply, via the secretary. When we did the family tree this way [horizontal] I found that in France, Titchener was the name, he wanted to know all about it and it was his daughter was the secretary that wrote back to me. I might say that, That was the intention for me to do, go into royal service, but the war put paid to that because of course, they wouldn't let you go to London.*

Her relinquishing of authority over her photograph collection further signals a shift away from her role as a remembering agent towards resituating herself as remembered.

> **Interviewer**: *Do You have many photos?*
> **Grace**: *Well the children have taken them, but I'll show you these [goes to one end of the room where photos are displayed on wall in frames]...Yes and something will crop up and I'll think oh, that's where that photograph went. And Scott, he's the worlds worst. So all the decent ones are gone.*
> **Interviewer**: *Were you happy to let those go?*
> **Grace**: *Well, quite yes. Because they're asking me all the time.*

The process of shifting usages of photography in the interests of remembering did not go entirely unnoticed by the participants themselves.

> **Susan**: *We used to go down to Abersoch and take a boat and sail and with 22 families so we'd swap and we'd have slide shows. Twenty two children and we'd have slide shows and all sorts of things. But we've grown out of that now. Now I mean, the kids [grandchildren] look through our old photographs and we tell them stories all about them.*

Susan actually describes 'growing out of' using photographs in group activities of taking and viewing images which aid the cohesion of the nuclear family through the generation of mnemonic resources. Photographs become used to stage the communication of pre-formed narratives, where no shared experiential memory exists. They are used as the fulcrum of co-authored narratives generated against the background of shared experiences.

Phonography as a Mnemonic Technology

Aside from its material connection to the past, remembering using music is characterised by a phenomenological experience quite different to that of photography. As an aural form of representation, the role of music in relating to the past has been theorised in ways distinct from that of the visual image. From the perspective of musical authorship, theorists have long argued that music is necessarily constructed in, and by, the social world. Despite valid accusations of Eurocentrism and the presumption that music merely reflects the social world (see Frith 1983; Martin, 1995), Adorno has been recognised as they key theorist in bringing social context to the study of music. In terms of music's relation to the past, Adorno's (2002) work allows an important assumption to be made: in its existence through time as a mechanically reproduced text, music carries with it the hallmarks of the conditions of its creation. Music is therefore understandably, a key media via which we relate and make sense of the past. However, this does not explain how meaning is actually made in the listening process, how we decode these whispers of time past contained in the musical text. Tia DeNora (2000) goes beyond a preoccupation with the musical text itself, positioning it as an 'active, dynamic material in social life' (p.5), drawing the focus onto the contexts of musical consumption. DeNora implicates the role of music in articulating a relationship with the past in her identification of it as a temporal medium, existing through time. Rather than music being understood as a stimulus for a particular affect, music is constitutive of that affect and acts as a carrier for it. Citing Lash and Urry (1994), she claims that music 'is a mediator of, in Proust's sense, the aesthetic, memory encrusted unconscious'. However, DeNora does not provide an account (nor aims to) for the various practical and imaginative ways that music is employed in evoking the past in the present and the various reasons for this being undertaken.

DeNora's link between music and a specifically affective form of remembering is confirmed in the talk of the participants. Although emotional responses were made to some photographs, the process of remembering whilst listening to music was systematically and almost exclusively described in emotional terms.

Eva: *When I was seventeen, I first met my cousin. He was really my mother's cousin. He was from my grandmother's family. I think she had about 18 children. Cos they died so much then didn't they. Yes. I met him, we were both about 17. For about six months. And he played the piano. He taught syncopation. He played the piano since he was about four. His mother taught it. Because he taught syncopation the music was haunting, black magic, that sort of thing. My grandmother (pause) put a stop to it. 'Its too near', she said 'its very dangerous (pause) to you'. Because, physically and everything you know? Of course she always blamed my mother's people...*
Interviewer: *Do you think about that a lot?*
Eva: *Certain pieces of music. And I think 'yes, we were very happy' and I didn't meet him again until (pause). Oh, his sister came and said he was absolutely desolate. And I said 'yes'. I didn't tell her why. I just couldn't bear the thought that he came from a family and I'd always wanted a family, that you know, that we couldn't have children or we'd be nervous.*

Interviewer: *How does that [remembering with music] feel?*
Rani: *Oh. Warm, nice, sad, happy. Happy but kind of sad at the same time because it was in the past, because I can'... do y'know what I mean? Because the past is the past and we've moved away from it, but at the same time it's, umm, it feels like it felt say ten years ago or five years ago. The feeling is still the same but then you know where you are in your present surroundings and you kind of wake up to reality and you kind of think 'well actually, that's why you feel sad'. Because...most of the time it triggers off a happy memory. You're then a sad memory, but because it's the happy thing and you can't go back to the past, it becomes a sad memory.*

Both participants use emotional and sensuous language to describe the experience of remembering with music. The experience evokes the subjective experience of the past not the abstract knowledge of it. The danger and secrecy of Eva's romantic situation is tied to the haunting tone and key of the music and the two things become mnemonically inseparable. For Rani, remembering with music is necessarily concerned with emotional experiences of the past. Rani suggests music allows her to feel the same as she did in years long since past, suggesting that the mnemonic musical experience is characterised by the embodied re-evocation of subjective feelings. This contrasts strongly with the analytic mnemonic work centred on photography, such as Rani's consideration of photographic images of her as objectified, multiple selves.

The alternative subject position music creates from that of photography can be further explored in Rachel's comparison of photography and phonography. Rachel's central point of differentiation is their specificity. She identifies music as more specific than a photograph in the sense that photographs make explicit a whole range of contextual information.

> **Interviewer**: *Is there a difference in memories evoked by photographs and by music?*
> **Rachel**: *Yeah, I do think there's a difference because, a particular record, is completely spontaneous and instantaneous when you hear it. And it's always there. That record, you relate to that experience. Like Pimper's Paradise to me is 1982, 1983 sitting on that doorstep. But when you look at a photograph, I think a photograph is probably more extensive than that, there's a whole realm of things that could come out of one year, one costume, one incident that that was a photograph of.*

She feels that music evokes a specific feeling, one that is inextricably tied to the music and the event that it evokes. She talks in sensory terms about listening to the Bob Marley track, *Pimper's Paradise*, so much so that listening to the music is sitting on a doorstep in 1982 and 1983. The remembering performed through the consumption of music is a bodily sensation, which is inconsistent with the notion of the objective recalling of past events. Rather than the past being brought into the present in a critical, objectified way, Rachel feels transported into the past. The past and present are melded into one subjective experience of time, simultaneously invoking the past and present. Remembering in this sense involves a quite different temporal movement to remembering with a photograph where the past is considered from the subjective perspective of the present. Rani talks about the clarity of the evocation of a subjective experience of the past, despite a distinct lack of contextual specificity.

> **Interviewer**: *Could you describe that feeling?*
> **Rachel**: *The feeling again, goes into the past. I'm not here. Do you know what I mean. Everything around me becomes a blur because I'm so engrossed in this feeling and trying to remember, if it was a situation, trying to remember who was there, y'know. The feeling comes to me first and then I think you try and remember names and people, umm, you can't remember them clearly but the feeling is always clear. The feeling always comes back there [pointing to chest].*

This strongly contrasts the photographic record's ability to attest directly to the scene and setting of a past event, the people present and the clothes one wore. What is lacking is the ability to evoke the feelings of the photographic subject, or the photographer or whomever the viewer identifies in the image. Music inverts this, intensely evoking feelings and emotions and experiences of the past without making objective contextual information immediately explicit.

The intensity of the feeling described by Rani can be examined and related to the composite nature of musical memories. Rachel highlights the emotional but not specifically temporal (in a linear sense) specificity of musical memories. Her love for the music is attributed to its mnemonic capacity to 'relate' to a period of her life that she particularly liked,

when she first became a mother. When she tells the story she includes sensory and very specific detail; the feeling of the heat, the sound of the background noise. Despite the fact it wasn't a particular event or instance (it covered an entire summer) she talks about it as a defining moment.

> **Rachel**: *It's a song called Pimper's Paradise by Bob Marley. Not many people would know it. The reason I like it so much is because it relates to a period of time in our lives when Tom was very small, probably '82, '83, in the last century! Umm it was a particularly nice summer and we had this Bob Marley LP, both of us really liked Bob Marley and one of the songs on this LP was Pimper's Paradise and it was a really nice summer, all the windows were open and we had a house that had four steps up to it and we used to sit on this doorstep, it was in the city, of this house and the neighbours would sit on their steps and the weather was beautiful and it was late evening and still warm and balmy and we used to play this Bob Marley song. And we used to have a bottle of red wine and just sit on the doorstep, and all you could hear in the background, it was one of those, I don't know, defining moments in your life, it was nothing particularly special, no special event, no special occasion, just this really nice summer. And we used to do it most evenings. We'd just sit there on the doorstep, people would walk past, we'd got a young baby at the time and he'd be asleep somewhere in the background. A gentle breeze and this Bob Marley, Pimper's Paradise going on in the background*

Music for Rachel need not be associated with a specific point in time, it sums up her courtship with her husband or the experience of being a mother. A central component of these memories then is the experience of a sense of self that occurred at a different point in time. The listening 'I' of another time is present alongside the listening 'I' of the present. The simultaneous co-presence of 'I then' and 'I now' infuses the experience with a profound or heightened sense of self and the dissolution of the boundaries between past and present in a sensory, bodily way, hence the feeling of being 'back there', which is commented on by Lillian.

> **Lillian**: *And so that was quite interesting that there are certain tracks that if they're played now, that's where it takes me back to... Or y'know?... You're kind of straight into where you were. Music maybe evokes maybe more feelings, whereas photography possibly, you'd remember more a specific event. Musical memory brings back more senses. More smells and tastes and things, whereas I think a photograph is an event or something happening rather than something just being.*

In contrast to the sensuous, bodily experience of the re-evoked subject, the viewing of an image maintains a insurmountable distance between the remembering self and the self of the indexed experience, restricting the experience of remembering to the cognitive rather than

sensuous. However, remembering with music is not only of value in the quality of the phenomenological experience. Rachel's remembering associated with *Pimper's Paradise* relates directly to the contemporary importance of her maternal identity and in the act of listening, that identity is given legitimacy in its existence through time as well as by the intensity with which it is felt.

The combination of the potentially composite nature of musical memory and experience of being 'back there' and feeling continuity between self as remembering and self as remembered suggests that a linear temporal model of continuous succession cannot adequately explain this. A concept of dilating temporal fields where sharp divisions between past and present dissolve in the listening experience is far more productive and can sustain a notion of subjective experience that is neither wholly past or present, but is an interrelated experience of then and now. The dual nature of this experience is self-consciously explained by Rani (p153) as subjectivities are intensely re-experienced but are always set against the knowledge that in their totality, those experiences are irretrievably past.

The role of music as a mnemonic technology is dependent on its material existence and cultural contexts of use. Music is heard in many places but it is perhaps most frequently heard in public; shopping malls, restaurants, on the radio and in many other places. This impacts on the way the participants felt able to use music as a remembering device and significantly, the level of control they had over this process.

> **Grace**: *Music catches you because it's always, it happens suddenly doesn't it, it's just on the radio. When you look at things, it's deliberate.*

Grace highlights the potentially intrusive and uncontrollable nature of musical remembering, when it elicits memories unbidden. This sudden intrusion may contribute to the emotional intensity experienced in musical remembering as its public usages make it less amenable to systematic and directed mnemonic activities.

> **Interviewer**: *Can you just describe to me what it felt like to listen to that?*
> **Sarah**: *It really is one of those heart-wrenching songs and make you go a bit funny (voice breaking). It's very much an emotional things cos obviously it gets me.*

The idea that the musical remembering is in some cases beyond the control of the listener is echoed here in the language used by Sarah. Although not describing public

experiences of music she nevertheless feels that the medium is in control of the remembering rather than her as a listener. The coherence and control gained from remembering the past in an objectified way, as with a photograph, is compromised where the remembered and the remembering subject become one, potentially contributing to the feeling of being overwhelmed by the music.

This is not to say that musical remembering cannot be deliberately invoked for particular purposes. Music's material existence as CD collections, digital files and cassettes allows it to be selected for use in the private domain as desired.

> **Interviewer**: *Have you got any music that's particularly associated with memory?*
> **Isobel**: *Yes.*
> **Interviewer**: *Can you tell me about it?*
> **Isobel**: *Country and western.*
> **Interviewer**: *What does that remind you of?*
> **Isobel**: *A fella. I was with this fella last year and he broke me heart.*
> **Interviewer**: *And that brings back the memories of...*
> **Isobel**: *Yeah.*
> **Interviewer**: *Of that relationship?*
> **Isobel**: *That I could kill him, yeah (laugh)*
> **Interviewer**: *Do you listen to it often?*
> **Isobel**: *Oh, I've got to be in the right mood*
> **Interviewer**: *What sort of mood?*
> **Isobel**: *When I'm strong. And I think 'up yours'.*
> **Interviewer**: *When you put it on and you're in that mood...*
> **Isobel**: *(pause) I can take it. But I couldn't take it if I were down.*
> **Interviewer**: *Is it a bit like testing yourself?*
> **Isobel**: *Yes. Its like 'I'm over you'. That's it.*

Isobel deliberately uses music as a mechanism of evoking memories of a particular romantic relationship. She does this at particular times to prove to herself that she has come to terms with the end of the relationship and is all the better for it. Rather than simply evoking a past subjective perspective of the relationship, her memory fuses the past and present feelings about the relationship into one mnemonic experience, revelling in her ability to master her pain, making the music usable in the present as an affirmation of her strength.

Remembering with music raised other potential difficulties for the participants in its everyday use. Rani spoke specifically about the incommunicability of musical memories and the accompanying alienation this caused.

> **Rani**: *I think it [remembering with music] kind of makes you, you don't want to be with people. That kind of experience, that moment, ten or five or seven years ago. That's where it kind of makes me feel sad*

> *because I think oh they're not here for me to share that, so I'm sharing it with myself, I'm not sharing it with anybody. D'y'know what I mean? I feel like, quite...it kind of makes me feel a bit alienated as well, if that makes sense. Just makes me feel like I'm on my own on this one, and I want to talk about it but I feel I can't express it to anybody and most of the time, I've found myself, I mean I've been away to different places, umm and come back and songs that I've played, like when I was abroad, y'know. I remember when I came back from Singapore, I used to listen to Lauryn Hill a lot then and it just goes in moments of me in my room, in my bedroom, just kind of evening time, the sun was setting down and just that feeling would come back. And I'd go on about it with my friends who had no idea what I was talking about and I know that it annoyed them. They actually said that to me. They said 'look you're relating it....', y'know a tune would come on and I'd say that really reminds me of Grace or Joan and I'd just say that, reminiscing and I'd go on about it so much and I'd tell them the stories and try and tell them with a lot of clarity, almost like I want them to be past of that experience. Sometimes they're quite happy to hear about it and sometimes they just like 'we can't relate to these people and this music that you're going on about' so I found that I am alienating myself again, because it's just me going on.*

The clarity of the remembered experience due to the imaginative fusion of past and present and the resultant continuity of subjectivity between the remembered and the remembered, means that musical remembering is a necessarily solitary experience and less amenable to communicative contexts. This inability to share the remembered experience proves alienating in social terms despite its value in terms of constructing a sense of self. This is reflected in the significant absence of talk regarding communal listening activities and the problems that can occur when this is attempted.

> **Sarah**: *Because you know we're six, five and a half years on, we now live together and it's kind of, I don't know. When he chooses it sometimes, it's not the time when perhaps I want to listen to it, so I like to listen to it on my own cos I'm much more probably soppy than him about remembering things.*

Sarah highlights the potential discrepancies in memories derived from the same song between her and her partner. As a result she prefers to listen on her own, leaving the meanings she draws from it unchallenged and intact. Photography's visual explicitness makes it a more suitable medium for the communication of memory. This is reflected in the participant's extensive discussion of communal viewing and authoring activities.

Music is a central mode for the articulation of cultural memory. Many of the women used music in different ways to connect themselves mnemonically with different aspects of their cultural background. Music of Asian origin has been used by the Asian and British Asian

participants to engage with an Asian cultural memory. Bollywood as a intergenerational genre.

> **Abha**: *In this family we have family songs. Everybody likes what the kids like or they'll argue like so I think it's quite a memory.*
> **Interviewer**: *What sort of music is that?*
> **Abha**: *Bollywood (laugh). Sometimes its just like 'nooo'. Cos, oh, Bollywood. Long, so long and complicated and sometimes of a song, you're like 'ok can you just change the song now' and all the kids like, let's put on Bhangra or English music and all the adults are like 'no, put on Bollywood, y'know just a little bit of Bollywood'. And there's a difference because there's old Bollywood and there's new Bollywood, and the old Bollywood is just like 'what are you listening to?!'. I think its good because sometimes when we'll sit there my dad will put these old songs on and talk about when they were young and when they used to listen to this song and 'I was three years old when this song came out' and I'm like 'yeah* (sarcastic)*'. I think it plays a big part in families as well. It does in my family.*

Shared cultural affiliations are communicated in the use of the Bollywood genre as it meaningful for people of all ages within the family group, providing a unifying listening experience. However, music of Asian origin was used differently by the participants.

> **Interviewer**: *Do you like music?*
> **Lalan**: *Yes I like our music. The folk dances.*

Where Lalan makes reference to 'our music' she identifies with an exclusively Indian folk culture which, although she has geographically re-located, indicates that she is striving to maintain this identity in a changed spatial setting.

In contrast, as young British Asian women, Abha and Rani both used music as a way of negotiating between Asian and British cultures, generating new cultural mnemonic narratives.

> **Abha**: *I think at my age, music is a really big thing. Me and my brother are really into music. Especially him. We like Bhangra and R&B and a bit of Hip Hop as well. So basically whatever he likes, I'll end up liking as well. Whatever I like, we'll get into.*

In talking about her music tastes, Abha expresses a preference for music, not only of Asian origin but also for music that is derived from black minority culture. The common denominator is not a common ethnic heritage but second generation migrant experience. In performing these preferences Abha is connecting specifically with British Asian cultural memory, but also with the cultural memory of ethnic minority experience in Britain more

generally. Rajindah Dudrah (2002) emphasises the role of listening and dancing as 'ways of making sense of oneself' (p.380) in terms of an ethnically inflected identity. In the intermingling of musical genres, she is able to negotiate an identity which is grounded in the experience of the 'other'.

Rachel uses music similarly to Abha in her negotiation of a cultural identity. Her sons are British Asian and she is British. As their mother, she has used music to align herself with their, as well as her own, cultural background. She cites music by *Bob Marley* and *The Fugees* as important in her musical memories, and in the act of listening re-situates herself in relation to a mnemonic narrative which features the cultural icons of ethnic minority experience in Britain. In this way she forges a cultural memory which integrates her own cultural background with that of her sons.

Music is integrated into many aspects of cultural life. Several participants mentioned the song played for the first dance at their wedding celebrations:

> **Sonia**: *Well, uh....I've brought a song by Buddy Holly called 'True Love Ways' cos I'd forgotten about the song...its quite poetic that you want to talk to me about memory and I'm getting married next month and my boyfriend Phil suggested 'True Love Ways' as our first dance song and I says to him 'I don't know it, we can't have a song I don't know'.*
>
> **Rachel**: *I was talking to a friend of mine about, about special songs and I was talking about the one we had when we got married, she said 'oh what was that then' and I went '.....' I couldn't remember. Isn't that awful I can't remember and I'm sitting there and I cant remember what this first dance tune was when I got married. I did eventually remember. And I was like 'I feel awful for not remembering'. It was actually Diana Ross and Marvin Gaye You Are Everything. I mean even though my husband and I are divorced, I don't feel particularly sad about hearing You Are Everything. It was just a period of my life. It was a happy event. Ok, our marriage has ended but I don't sort of think 'oh, I must leave the room, switch it off'. I heard it once at a wedding, and that was hard, I must admit, that was hard hearing it at somebody else's wedding. That was too much. That was too, too much.*

The use of music in this way, connects the women to a network of heterosexual cultural conventions centred around marriage in the subsequent listening experiences. Sonia makes clear that it is important for the song to hold personal meanings in order to be used in this cultural context illustrating that the women's personal and cultural memory are brought together in act of listening. The cultural obligation to use music in this way is evident from Rachel's shame at forgetting her wedding song which would suggest that she had become

disconnected from this traditional network of associations, but at the same time it is clear that, in certain circumstances, the songs personal significance for her can return in a sudden torrent of emotion. The song's affective relation to memory is highly context dependent..

Recorded music and photography were not the only technologies used in remembering activities. Several women mentioned having video camera's but none were active in producing or viewing them on a regular basis. There was one significant use of an alternative technology discussed by a participant which involved the experimental use of mobile phone video technology in remembering.

> **Rani**: *I think it would be weird if people did record their memories. But I have actually done that. I have actually recorded a moment that was really sad on my phone and I told that to my friend and she said that was really weird and I said 'actually, I just wanted to see how...I just wanted to be open and talk to the camera'.*
> **Interviewer**: *How did you find that looking back at it?*
> **Rani**: *I don't know. I'm trying to remember. (Pause) I remember thinking I don't want anyone to see that. Because it was a very private me. Umm I know people don't think about... so if somebody was to say 'yeah, do you want to see a y'know like 'do you want to see a video of me kind of like talking and talking to the point where I'm actually crying'. I might say, 'yeah, that's interesting, lets have a look' but everybody's not going to react the same way as me. So I kind of kept that private. I mentioned it to one of my friends and she said she was really worried about me and I said 'you don't need to be worried, it's called theatre, it's different. Because I recorded a sad moment, you think it's strange'. It was strange looking at it as me, as coming from me. But, but no, it was really clear to me because I was in my..., because it was me and I expressed me without judging me. Without...do you know what I mean? Without kind of thinking...it was just me in my room recording myself. First it kind of started off kind of talking umm, and I think it was at a moment, a stage where I was feeling quite sad as well. But I just wanted to see how I would be, how I looked when I was sad. And ummm, I didn't see any problem with that. I think we get told a lot of the time, how we should be, just generally in society.*

Firstly Rani self-consciously records herself in order to re-view herself experiencing a sad moment. The reason for doing so lies in her feeling that traditional modes of self-representation are inadequate to depict unpleasant experiences and cultural conventions actively prohibit it. It is not insignificant that Rani details at great length elsewhere in the interview, the difficulties in coming to terms with her British and Asian cultural heritage and her gendered role within this. Even in this extract she emphasises the stifling nature of social conventions. The demands made on Rita to develop a coherent sense of self under the dual expectations of British and Asian culture, using the representational conventions that these dictate, in a sometimes contradictory manner (as with the fluid boundaries between

photography and art in Indian cultural and the firmly entrenched notion of indexicality in the West), mean that she is looking for new ways of representing herself and navigating these complex cultural codes as part of that process. Coming from a novel point of intersection between these two cultural imperatives, she is in a unique position to play with and modify existing modes of self-representation in the generation and exploration of mnemonic resources.

Narrating memory

It is not only technologies and their use in remembering that is gendered, the very linguistic techniques of communicating mnemonically are also gendered. The interview data from the participants showed high amounts of reported speech. Ely and McCabe (2005) have documented the strong association between women and the use of reported speech in narratives based on or around memories. Ely and McCabe compare the mnemonic speech acts of boys, girls, women and men. They suggest that girls are socialised to listen more to others around them and that women view communication as essentially co-operative, whereas men appear to be more competitive. I would like to go beyond this explanation to suggest that women are using reported speech to lend their mnemonic narratives authority. This may not be required of many men in their talk as authority is afforded to their narratives by virtue of their gender. Women, however, have to perform particular rhetorical work to lend their narratives authenticity and authority as it is not always automatically granted. For example, the participants often reported the speech of people who have or had a large influence in their life, often figures of authority.

Abha still lives with her parents and as such, her parents and family elders have a large role in her life. She frequently uses direct quotations from her elders and particularly her father:

> **Abha**: *Bollywood. Laugh. Sometimes it's just like 'nooo'. Cos, oh, Bollywood. Long, so long and complicated and sometimes of a song, you're like 'ok can you just change the song now' and all the kids like 'let's put on Bhangra or English music' and all the adults are like 'no, put on Bollywood', y'know 'just a little bit of Bollywood'... I think it's good because sometimes when we'll sit there my dad will put these old songs on and talk about when they were young and when they used to listen to this song and 'I was three years old when this song came out' and I'm like 'yeah'.*

Grace frequently cites her husband and, as is evident from this short extract, he was clearly a defining force in her imaginative as well as lived experience. In directly reporting his

speech she is assuming the authority of his voice which legitimates her shifting perspective away from a humanist approach to a conservative one.

> **Grace**: *Well, my husband died twenty years now and I wonder what he would have thought of life today. He always used to say, 'no' he said ' the do-gooders in this country are going to ruin it', and he said 'and you're one of them'. And that's what's happening isn't it?*

Through this linguistic technique, women confer the legitimacy of the subject position of parent, husband or elder onto their own accounts by incorporating the direct speech of those people. This need to construct authority for the listener rather than being automatically entitled to it is specific to female lived experience as a subordinate group in the patriarchal structure both historically and in contemporary society. Issues of power and entitlement resonate through the act of remembering as they do in so many other spheres of women's lived experience.

The characteristics of the relationship women build with their own pasts and broader public pasts are marked by gendered expectations of the form that relationship should take. The women narrated particular interactions with the past which, as Rachel put it, enabled them to perform being 'a proper girl'.

> **Rachel**: *And I'm a great one for telling stories. Women are like that aren't they? Funnily enough when I was reading your blurb thing it reminded me of that book Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus and the way that men and women relate to different things. That men are very practical and if they've got a problem they'll try and sort it out themselves and if they can't sort it out they'll go and ask another bloke that does know from experience, whereas women they don't necessarily want an answer to a problem. What women do is they share. If you said to me you were having problems with a boyfriend or at home or with parents or anything. What women do is they share stories from life experience and you sort of, if you have three or four women, they'll all sort of add their little bits. And it's not that they're trying to give you an answer because you don't want an answer anyway. What they're doing is working from shared experience and that sort of goes on to other things and you sort of mull it over and, y'know get a bit of input and that's fine. That's actually what women want and how women work. But if you said the same thing to a man, say you come home from work and say to your boyfriend 'I hate my boss blah, blah' and he'd just be 'change your job'. To him that's the answer, don't bother moaning about it, change your job. Whereas you actually want him to say, 'oh no, what's happened love, tell me about it, what's he been saying to you, I know just what you mean, I've had the same thing at work today'. So men and women are very different in that way.*

> **Interviewer**: *Do you notice a difference between the way you and your sons relate to the past?*
> **Rachel**: *Yeah, cos I'm romantic. I'm romantic and emotional and a proper girl. They say 'you're such a girl mum'. Yeah they um, I suppose because they're boys as well, they tend to be more practical, I tend to be a bit more (pause).*
>
> **Susan**: *I think women remember more socially consciously to men. Men seem to remember in black and white. You remember the hurts and the ups and downs and all sorts of things. Adam is very clear logical...I mean his father emigrated but he can't see that immigrants that they are doing exactly what his father did. Um, I just think women look sideways more unless there is a very sensitive man.*
>
> **Interviewer**: *When would you sort of pick that record out to listen to normally?*
> **Sarah**: *It's an interesting one because, because its Simon's and because you know we're six, five and a half years on, we now live together and its kind of, I don't know. When he chooses it sometimes, it's not the time when perhaps I want to listen to it, so I like to listen to it on my own cos I'm much more probably soppy than him about remembering things and nostalgic. Um, but sometimes I choose something to put on and I'll put that on, to try and, perhaps I suppose, make him think, remember the good times.*

The key features that emerge are a focus on emotional or private memories based more on feelings and relationships between people rather than external events. This again suggests that women's remembering is in terms of action and expectation, largely concerned with issues involving the private sphere of experience. This emerges in opposition to an imagined masculine form of remembering, concerned with clarity, logic and practicality. This has a dual impact on the role of women as remembering agents. Firstly it ties feminine memory and remembering with the ephemeral and impractical by the implication of opposition. Women's memories do not have to be taken seriously or acted upon, nor are they afforded the status of authority or even sometimes authenticity in their status as 'soppy' or 'nostalgic'. This is most clearly elucidated in Rachel's son's dismissal of their mother's remembering with the pejorative claim that Rachel was just being 'a girl'. Rachel's inability to put into words the implied status of women's memory in relation to her son's suggests that this is more problematic for women in their everyday lives than the extracts would first suggest.

The foregrounding of emotions in remembering can be linked to the importance of relationships in participants' remembering. Many of the women talked about themselves in relation to others, constructing themselves as someone's wife, mother, daughter or colleague. The importance of relationships in communicating mnemonic narratives is inseparable from the centrality of feelings and emotion in memory. Sarah's extract suggests that the description of feminine memory as emotional in contrast to masculine remembering, has practical

consequences for the enactment of those relationships. She performs the mnemonic role of re-remembering their shared past and is active in encouraging him to do so with the use of music relevant to their relationship. In doing this, Sarah bears a considerable amount of the responsibility for maintaining the shared past that the relationship is founded on. Studies of 'emotion-work' suggest that Sarah's experience is not an isolated one and is symptomatic of women's more general responsibility for the management of 'the emotional climate within a relationship' (Erikson, 2005: 338).

Susan sees this gendered memory as a more sensitive and nuanced version of the remembered past. She describes it as only available to women because the assumed authoritative and authentic attributes of masculine remembering, such as practicality and logic, preclude the adoption of plural perspectives on the past and the resulting sensitivity to the narratives of others. Instead of being limited in terms of political power, Susan constructs women's memory as more politically progressive than men's, suggesting more political power in terms of potential if not practice. The link between feminine remembering and emotion provides sites of political and imaginative possibility alongside regressive, exclusionary possibilities. No participant showed exclusively an enactment of one or the other but performed a particular and personal negotiation between the two opposed versions of feminine remembering.

Linguistic techniques used in mnemonic work do not only consist of discursive devices in the context of the interview. The very language the participants chose to use was intimately connected to their mnemonic activity.

> **Abha**: *I struggle with my Gujarati.*
> **Interviewer**: *Do you speak Gujarati at home?*
> **Abha**: *My mum's telling me I don't speak enough Gujarati cos she talks to me in Gujarati but I always respond in English. Also with my Aunties who don't understand or even if they do understand it's out of respect, to talk Gujarati to them. So I do talk Gujarati but hardly. But at the moment I'm trying to speak Gujarati. My brother will speak Gujarati, when he's messing around with people.*
> **Interviewer**: *When you talk about the past with your family, is it all in Gujarati?*
> **Abha**: *Sometimes it is. My mum will be sitting right next to me and every five minutes I'll stop or need some help and then I'll get called 'sweet' and how cute my Gujarati. My mum is like 'no, its crap'.*

For Abha, being able to speak Gujarati is a matter of having access to several forms of mnemonic narrative. Also at stake is her ability to contribute to these narratives. The use of this language in the act of speaking, connects Abha at once to Indian ethnic heritage, the

social memory of the family and personal memories articulated within it. For Rani, being able to speak Bengali, in itself is constitutive of her cultural memory.

> **Rani**: *But due to that [her father's traditionalism] y'know, we've benefited a lot as well. Because we've had elders that have supported us in learning our language and our mother tongue and I think like the language skills that we have in terms of writing and reading Bengali which is our mother tongue language, ummm y'know. We use that now. I use that in my job and y'know I'm glad I know my mother tongue language because I meet a lot of British Asians don't, not their fault, not a fault of, not their fault, but I just think, 'God, y'know, how do you communicate to your parents'? They're all communicating in English, not that it's a bad thing but at the same time, when it comes to where they come from and their culture and their identity in terms of their ethnic culture, they've not had a lot of that support if you care to put it that way.*

Being able to speak in her 'mother tongue' is a fundamental way of articulating her identity as a British Asian through the connection it provides with her Indian ethnic heritage and, through its pedagogical transmission, with the elders of her own family. Without this skill she feels she would be both practically and imaginatively alienated from her cultural background and the older generations of her family. Language itself is a tool by which cultural memory can implicitly be brought into the present in order to negotiate and articulate contemporary identities and interpersonal connections.

Chapter 9
Re-Connecting Public and Personal Memory

Memory has so far been considered in terms of the practical and imaginative impact that gender has on the processes of remembering and how remembering allows a space for the construction and re-construction of gender across the passage of time. The tools and technologies we use in articulating memory have also been considered, investigating the limitations and potential that these pose to the ways in which the participants can make sense of the past. In developing a more intimate consideration of the ways in which women remember, this leads us back to the two distinct but interrelating dimensions of remembering that have underpinned all that has been considered thus far. The oscillations between public and private time and memory have been touched on in relation to notions of domesticity and the public sphere, but here we need to delve deeper into these two realms of interaction with the past and in doing so, assess their reconciliation in the participant's narratives. How is public time and memory made sense of and how is personal and private memory made meaningful in view of one another?

A Time to Remember?

Women's interaction with the past can be broadly broken down into two different organising principles: private and public temporalities. The division of public and private temporalities may at first seem an artificial distinction. However, these two temporal modes emerged in the interviews as interrelated but distinct features of women's mnemonic action and meanings generated by it, guiding the ways in which they understood the past, their use of it and their relationship to it. Louise makes the differentiation in the most clear terms although it features more subtly in many of the other interviews.

> **Louise**: *...it's ever so much a decade thing for me. The fifties I was a child. The sixties I was (pause) y'know, a teenager. The seventies, well I spent the seventies having children and bringing up children and music certainly stopped for me then. I think uh, there are two sorts of people so far as music is concerned. There are people who are music and love music and will always listen to music. And there are people for whom music is about when they were young, y'know and that's what stays with them, the music that was around when they were, y'know, out there. And I wasn't out there anymore.*

Louise's description of her interaction with temporally identified music is set up by way of contrast between being 'out there' in public space and the implied binary opposite of being 'in

here', in the private sphere of domesticity. The organisation of her remembering is very much based on the distinction between time spent in the public domain, interacting with popular culture, and the time she spent as a wife and mother separated from those cultural activities of the public domain. The secondary dimension of this discursive distinction is the implied opposition between belonging and otherness. Being 'out there', for Louise, is also a matter of being 'other', or external to the group within which she primarily defines her sense of self, resulting in a distancing of public temporality as a semantic structure in favour of familial temporal structures.

It is important to note that the balance between being 'in here' or 'out there' in terms of participation in different temporal structures, varies depending on the circumstances of the individual participants, but across the participants, there was a tension in the negotiation between public and private temporal structures.

Domestic time as both a practical and imaginative structure, is a pervasive force in structuring women's relationship with the past. Women across the life cycle often remain largely responsible for domestic labour such as cleaning and childcare even when in part or full time employment (Coltrane, 2000). For the participants this was most often the case and was most apparent in circumstances where the women had young children. Domestic responsibility was frequently cited as a limitation in engaging with public forms of the past, particularly on television. For example, both Gayle and Lillian suggest that a combination of paid and unpaid labour contributes to a shrinking of their imaginative space in which to articulate coherent relationships with the past, in Lillian's case particularly in establishing a continuity of their personal sense of self over time in relation to pasts other than that of the family. Prioritisation entails putting practically central familial mnemonic narratives over broader political and cultural narratives which relate to the past. When taken in conjunction, Lillian's comments illustrate clearly how increasing domestic and working responsibilities facilitate disengagement with public mnemonic narratives about wider women's issues such as suffrage.

> **Gayle**: *I can't say I dwell on the past. Maybe because my life at the moment is quite busy, then I tend not to dwell too much on the past... I tend now to watch the news and that's about it on telly unless there's something that I, cos I'm either working after the kids have gone to bed but I do like to spend sometimes watching the news or if I'm not working I might read, I'm not a big, I'm not someone who switches the telly on and watches it all night.*
>
> **Lillian**: *And I still, I find it difficult now because I'm thinking I don't know which way to vote. I haven't got a clue at the moment. I've actually got to a*

point where I don't know whether it's worth voting which I find really scary because voting, you know, you had to vote when we were kids. You know it was just something, it was a real responsibility and you did it. And for the first time I'm starting to move away from that, and it kind of scares me slightly because it's been a real kind of principle in my life, I've always voted and it's been very important to do so. And you know, you think 'crikey, if I'm getting that apathetic about it then something must be wrong'

Lillian: *I think as you get older, your priorities do change and you have less time I suppose apart from everything else. And you have other, you have other things and other responsibilities that take up your attention, it's not just time it's actually the amounts of time in terms of your mind that you spend on things because you've got work, you've got family and those kind of responsibilities do take over.*

The participants who have the least domestic responsibility, such as Jenny who is unmarried with no children and lives alone, show a higher level of engagement with public mnemonic narratives as indicated by her extensive talk about feminism and the nature of the women's movement (see p.102 and p.105). She utilises these very public organisations of time in order to structure her narrative of a personal past and in doing so fuses public and private temporal structures.

This does not mean that domestic responsibility, and a lesser use of public temporality as an organising principle in narrating private pasts, preclude the opportunity to create coherent mnemonic narratives, rather that domestic temporal structures are more extensively employed in the processes of making sense of past experience and consequently in a temporal sense of self. Several participants suggested ways in which domestic time enables engagements with the past as it creates imaginative time and space for the articulation of personal narratives.

Interviewer: *Could you tell me which song you've brought?*
Maya: *Christina Aguilera's 'Beautiful'.*
Interviewer: *Why did you pick that one?*
Maya: *Well I went travelling the year before last, and that one piece of music was the one piece of music I'd listen to when I was walking around on the beach or taking a long journey, or looking at the scenery out of the window in South America in the mountains and things like that. So it means a lot because it brings back memories of the good times I had travelling and bad but good mainly.*
Interviewer: *When do you most listen to your [mnemonically significant] music?*
Maya: *When I'm in the car, when I'm cleaning up.*

Interviewer: *Is there music that has memories from when you were...*
Iris: *My youth? Yes, I was young (laugh). Yeah, me rock and roll. I love it.*

Interviewer: *What does it make you feel like?*
Iris: *Getting up and doing it.*
Interviewer: *Do you do that?*
Iris: *Ay. I still rock and roll.*
Interviewer: *When would you put it on?*
Iris: *Well anytime. When you're hoovering or anything.*

Interviewer: *When do you most look at them and get them out?*
Lillian: *Usually when we're trying to tidy (laugh). It's either yeah, it's usually kind of either when we're...well we used to do it because we had, we kind of had prints back and so we'd take the albums down and slot them in and I suppose at that point you kind of look back at what was already in the album so there was that...ummm.*

Remembering using photographs or music is used as part of domestic work or as an alternative use of the time set aside for domestic work, as features in both Maya and Lillian's accounts. For Maya, the activities she discusses as spaces and times available for her to remember through music are often solitary. These activities give her legitimate time away from her family and paid work which she can use to perform the imaginative work of remembering. The solitude domestic labour provides enables her to focus on memories which relate not only to her as a partner, mother or daughter, but also to her time spent travelling alone and gaining her desired work experience (see p.138 and p.166) abroad to be able to follow her chosen career back in Britain. In this sense her memory work is simultaneously work that is constructive of a sense of self which goes beyond her interpersonal relations in a family setting, but which remains within the parameters of domestic temporal structures.

Iris also cites cleaning as a time when she engages with her personal past through music. Interestingly, it appears that for Iris there is a significant embodied element to the remembering she does in domestic work. The urge to get up and move associated with the mnemonically charged rock and roll is conflated with the physical movement of vacuuming. In the act of domestic work, remembering is not only imaginative but physical. Dancing in one's front room is not necessarily a legitimate embodied action but domestic work for women is, particularly given that Iris is in her sixties and age places a heightened restriction on appropriate bodily movement. Under the guise of a sanctioned bodily movement, vacuuming becomes a site of resistance, a location for the imagined freedoms of rock and roll as an embodied act. The domestic action of vacuuming acts as site of crossover between the public act of dancing and the home environment, transforming the home, at least for the length of the song, into a creative mnemonic space.

In spite of the centrality of private temporalities, public temporalities remain a key structuring feature of women's lives especially where the participants live in circumstances

where familial narratives do not require such intensive active remembrance on a day-to-day basis, such as living alone. Public temporality consists of both public spaces where the past can be engaged with and the temporal structures and imperatives which emerge from those spaces.

Experience in the public sphere where women are engaged in employment provides alternative spaces for remembering to be undertaken. Sonia talks about her use of memory in forging a work-based relationship:

> **Sonia**: *Yeah sometimes I would talk about them to a different set of people umm, its like I'm working with someone new at the minute and we've hit it off quite well and um I talk to her sometimes cos she asks about my family and things like that, so we do just sit and...and we do talk about daft things that we've done and nice memories.*

Lillian also talks about the role of memory in sustaining a work-based group identity based on shared knowledge of events:

> **Lillian**: *At work certainly. I've only been there two or three years, I perhaps haven't got the kinds of memories that other people have, but certainly you know in the staff room we'll talk about things that have happened before, and it might be sparked off by a particular event like somebody coming in and 'you'll never guess what somebody's just asked for on the enquiry desk', we get some ridiculous enquiries and it'll spark off a memory with somebody else. And it is quite a bonding exercise there as well.*

This illustrates the mnemonic action of constructing alternative group-based identities and sites of belonging that run alongside those created in a familial context. This space enables women to articulate new and different accounts of the past which may not be relevant in a familial context, but which inform alternative and multiple identities that are relevant to their agency both private and public domains.

Public time is not only important in allowing women space to forge alternative mnemonic narratives of their public experiences and the consequent capacity for ongoing participation in the public domain, but also in providing narrative resources for making sense of personal pasts. The use of public narratives is necessarily tied to gendered experience insofar as the upheavals in women's life courses over the last century have been fast-paced and far-reaching, necessitating a particular use of enduring narratives of change. Louise illustrates this in her use of narratives of public time as a framework for understanding her own life course.

> **Louise**: *I don't, don't think about the past a lot but I'm aware that I am a product of my past and all my attitudes and all my expectations and um are based on my childhood and the way I was brought up and my parents and my family. I think inevitably. Um I think the interesting thing that I've found is (pause) is that while things are happening to you, you feel as if you're in control and you're making the decisions. I think it's very interesting to look and see how much of what you did and the decisions you made and the actions you took were dictated by the zeitgeist if you like. I find that very interesting. Umm, just the fact that I married very young was about the way things were at that time. It felt like a personal decision, it didn't feel as if it was something that I was doing because it was expected or what was done at the time, but I'm sure it was. I heard from a friend of mine of mine recently that her 26 year old was expecting a baby and my first reaction was 'oh gosh, how young'.*

Public narratives about the changing role of women in socio-cultural terms is central for Louise in enabling her to make sense of her experience of what she feels is an outmoded way of life. The public narratives of gender-appropriate roles in the 1960s allow her to situate her life as appropriate to the time in which she grew up and that locate responsibility for her life choices in her historical context. This permits her to see the historical context in which she lived as declining in relevance rather than her sense of self as an individual. This allows her to retain a positive view of her personal past *and* come to terms with changes in women's opportunities and life courses. Public time is in this sense vital as a structure which provides a historical framework through which personal experience can be contextualised. The micro-frameworks of personal time alone cannot adequately accommodate and make sense of the broader shifts of social change and therefore would quickly render some experiences obsolete and meaningless. An integration of public and private time is therefore necessary to enable continuity of self to be sustained over shifting historical time.

None of the participants exclusively used either public or private temporalities but did so in varying degrees and using different points of connection and intersection. Although similarities and themes have emerged in women's specific negotiation of public and private time and memory, the relations between these temporalities cannot be cast in fixed relationships with one another. In narrating the self, public and private mnemonic structures emerged at different points in the interview, suggesting that the interactions between these two temporalities was in constant flux, reformulated depending on the demands of the present. Gayle spoke of herself as a mother and as a career women and sometimes as a fusion of the two.

> **Gayle**: *I'm a management consultant. I work part time. I've got two children who are five and eight. I've been married for 13 years, something like that!*
>
> **Gayle**: *Certainly when I look to the people I work with who haven't got kids, they work and when they've finished work, there's no, no real responsibility. I was that once, you work all the hours god sends, you earn a lot of money but at the end of the day you spend a lot and you've got no responsibility.*

In the first extract, Gayle introduces separately herself as a management consultant, a mother and a wife, differentiating between co-existing roles. In the second extract she talks about motherhood and work in tandem, bringing together her existence in private and public temporalities, simultaneously drawing on mnemonic narratives of waged and unwaged labour. It is important to note that this use of different narratives necessarily changed over the course of women's lives as their experiences and circumstances changed, altering the balance between public and private temporal identities. As her children have grown up and left home, Francesca spends a considerable amount of time talking about her publicly derived sense of self as a 'free-lance educator' and narrates her life story around career markers, invoking alternative mnemonic narratives to motherhood, which are orientated to public temporal frameworks of career progression.

Public time is, of course, not universally experienced in the same way. For all three of the older Asian ladies as well as Louise, music was predominantly associated with public space and time. For Lalan, Meera and Mukta, as young girls, there was no access to recorded music and so singing in public spaces such as at work (which was often domestic but with the large extended families living together, it would be a stretch to call this private space in the strictest sense of the word), at school or at religious festivals was the main engagement they had with music as a cultural medium. Music was also rarely engaged with in the context of a peer group but was instead experienced mostly in the presence of the family or figures of authority such as teachers. Although Francesca as an older British woman notes the economic structuring of her consumption of recorded music (see p.137), the older Asian participants encountered a near total lack of access. Consequently there seems to be a distinct difference in the mnemonic uses of music between the older ladies with limited access to recorded music and those for whom recorded music has always been a feature in their lives. For the western women, music was frequently invoked as providing mnemonic resources for remembering the youth culture they experienced as children, teenagers and young adults, emphasising broad historical movements. For the older Asian women, music was subsumed into the ritualised frameworks of family, folk and religious life, and through contexts of performance, bridged

public and private temporalities. Cultural, familial and individual memory are integrated almost to the point of inseparability.

Music for Mukta, Meera and Lalan is essentially performative. Dance and music are inseparable and are most frequently spoken of in the context of religious and cultural festivals.

> ***Mukta:*** *I enjoy listening to the music, I enjoy dancing but uh latest music, you know typical dancing, they call it bhangra. We love it... We used to see English pictures in our language um, so there were songs in there, but not particularly music. Just songs with good words to it. Even now...now it's the music that counts. It's whatever they're saying has got nothing to do with the music. The music is the music. These days it's just the music. We listen to it and we like to dance on the tune. I do especially. Even at weddings, they do have these ceremonies when they just have music, just after the reception they do have this. It's nice, everybody enjoys it. It doesn't matter what steps they're dancing because they change day by day, day by day, they become faster and faster and faster and some people cannot catch up with that. It is for the youngsters to change. It is nice. Music is nice to listen to lately. But in the past it was (pause) school and home, school and home, school and home. We used to go out but always with parents. We were never allowed to go out alone. It makes a difference you know. When you are on your own, you try something else, you try something with your friends. With your parents it is different.*

Mukta only talks about music in connection to dancing or singing, suggesting the experience of music is an embodied one. The emphasis on traditional rituals such as wedding ceremonies in the use of music also suggests that in terms of its mnemonic use, rather than relating to specific personal memories, music connects Mukta to a broader cultural mnemonic network. In this sense, music provides an occasion for the bodily enactment of cultural memory rather than self-conscious reflection on it (see Chakravorty, 2004 for an extended discussion of Indian dance as embodied cultural memory). For the western women, music, although it invokes public time, is often private in consumption and the meaning made from it. For Mukta, the integration of dance means that music not only invokes the public sphere, its mnemonic roles are enacted in a public, or at least familial, way.

There is no division in Mukta's talk between the music of the younger family members and the music the older family members enjoy, only the speed of their dancing. This does not mean that using music in the construction of a shared cultural experience is static and cannot accommodate future-oriented change. Mukta specifically highlights the role of the members of the group and the incessantly changing dance steps, highlighting the capacity of cultural performance to be responsive to new experiences and circumstances. It is particularly

notable that Mukta does not feel obligated to change her dance steps in line with the youngsters and that it is not for her to change. There is an easy co-existence between old and new cultural performances in Mukta's narrative. Dancing itself becomes a dilating sphere of public time rather than a moment in a linear progression as the co-presence of different historical moments is engendered through the dancing.

Lalan and Meera both cited the Indian folk dance the *Garba* which is performed by Indian women as part of the Hindu festival Navaratri.

> **Lalan** (interpreter): *Yes I like our music. The folk dances. The Garba.*
> **Interviewer**: *Is it something you have always listened to and enjoyed?*
> **Lalan** (interpreter): *I don't know how to play any music but we sing the Garba. We have this Festival that usually comes in November. Its called Garba and it's a nine day festival and all Hindus get together and it is a special dance that you do. It celebrates good over evil. So that's a very prominent festival amongst Hindus. During those festivals all the girls get dressed and everybody goes out and they used to sing for that festival. Her sisters and cousins and...in her family everybody used to live together.*
>
> **Interviewer**: *Is music something that has featured in your life?*
> **Lalan** (interpreter): *there was not so much music, but what they did have were all the hymns, the prayers, the Garba. Those things that they used to sing a lot.*

The highly ritualised use of music promotes the embodied invocation of cultural memory and is performed in a public space. As a mnemonic activity, it also provides cohesion in the present in its social enactment across generational boundaries. This is of particular significance in retaining a coherent sense of a Hindu group or community in a national context where Hindu is not the main religion followed and where religion in any form is declining as an semantic and interpretative system.

Religious rituals as manifestations of public temporal structures play a fundamental role for some of the participants in directing remembering activities in terms of content and processes of enactment. Lalan describes the religiously regulated process of remembering the dead, recognisable as ritualised mourning.

> **Lalan** (interpreter):*The death is very bad in our family. Even my niece and my nephew, brother and sister, even they died in an accident. All these deaths are very bad. So many people we lost in accident*
> **Interviewer**: *Is it important to remember those people?*
> **Lalan** (interpreter):*Yes, always. When we, we go to India and do some religious ceremony – on those times we remember all the people who died. We have specific ceremonies and specific days within which we*

> *remember and pay tribute to all the people who have died in our family. That means even the extended family. Even just a thought of them at that ceremony is important. In the culture, after somebody has passed away there is a ceremony we do called the 'Shraddha'. We do after some years. That sort of liberates the soul. It's a very taxing ceremony because it's almost like a wedding, sometimes bigger than a wedding in terms of preparation and other family having to be there and it lasts over seven days. It's very religiously rigid. For any person that's died, you have to do that. You can do it communally as well, you can do it with ten people or five that have passed away in your family or whatever. But the point is to liberate that soul because if that soul doesn't end up liberated it tends to haunt you and it is an unhappy soul. So we believe a lot in the memory of our ancestors at these special ceremonies.*

Although the content and forms of the Shraddha ceremonial ritual varies, the remembering involved in the performance of this ritual, as it is described by Lalan, is tightly prescribed and constructed as an obligation as well as a desire, placing central importance of notions of lineage and heredity which contribute to the bounded coherence of the religious group and legitimates the practically important familial networks amongst the living. In terms of the content of the Shraddha, the deliberately labour intensive ritual melds imaginative and physical labour, the religiosity of the ritual and the personal dimension of the specific memories. In so doing, traumatic personal remembering becomes contingent on the framework of the ritual. When the ritual ceases, personal remembering may also. This legitimises not only remembering, but also forgetting, enabling the potential disruption the past may cause in the present to be limited.

Public time must be seen as structured in different ways in different cultures. It is directed inwards to the group or individual in different ways and at different levels of prescription. Connerton (1989) suggests that rituals, particularly religious ones, are literally performances of social memory; the repetition of bodily movements and the formalism of language habituated by generation after generation of a particular culture, enact the past of that group in the present, telling those who undertake it the story of the group and positioning them within it (pp.53-61). For Lalan then, remembering in the enactment of the Shraddha is twofold: firstly the ceremony regulates mourning, rationalising remembrance of those family members who have died; secondly the undertaking of the religious ritual itself invokes a social and cultural memory, linking Lalan to the mnemonic communities of the family and Hindu culture more widely. She refers to both her family and Hindu culture, performing social and cultural mnemonic activity by invoking the historically rooted practices of these groups and in performing them, situates herself as a member of them.

Abha describes her increasing observance of Hindu religious customs in specific relation to performing acts of cultural remembrance and the articulation of an identity informed by these cultural memories.

> **Abha**: *At the same time though, us, we advance and some people tend to forget their cultural background and I can't in this family because I have my whole family and mum and dad's sisters and they're always on my back. It's a really important thing to me definitely.*
> **Interviewer**: *In what ways is that central in your life?*
> **Abha**: *My view on things. Stuff like issues like abortion, animal rights, human rights. Like um, I've recently become a vegetarian. Which is very hard. Oh my God! About three months. Because I'm Hindu so vegetarianism is... even though my parents aren't vegetarian. I think it just influences my views on life. My opinions in life.*

As her parents do not observe Hindu traditions to the extent Abha is undertaking them, it can be inferred that Abha, resulting from her particular socio-cultural position as a first generation British Asian, has a different relationship to Hindu and Indian cultural memory in general to that of her parents. Perhaps in the articulation of an identity which is 'other' in relation to the expected notions of Britishness, the performance of cultural memory which lends authenticity and legitimacy to the Asian 'otherness' of Abha's British Asian identity becomes more intense. Public time and its incarnations as cultural memory should not be seen as operating through intergenerational transmission in any simplistic sender-receiver paradigmatic sense, but as enactments that alongside familial and cultural, implicit and explicit, instruction, are reinterpreted in the new and changing historical, social and cultural conditions of the present.

Of the British women, only Grace used religion as a system of ritualising her mnemonic activity. For Grace, religion provided her with a structure through which to marshal memory, and although experienced in a less prescriptive way than Lalan and Meera, enables her to regulate the more painful aspects of thinking about the past.

> **Grace**: *Oh yes, I do. I like to be at home Sunday evening. I like* Songs of Praise. *I've had two strokes and I know I sail pretty close to the wind at times with stress. But I do like, I can't sing, the second op took my voice, so I don't go to church but I do like* Songs of Praise. *That's when I think about things. Not all sadly.*

> **Grace**: *Well it upsets me, it upsets me because after twenty years, I still miss him.*
> **Interviewer**: *Is that something you're aware of when you're remembering or is it something that you feel all the time?*
> **Grace**: *Basically all the time. I can't really move on. But then again, I've always, being one girl and having three brothers, I got my own interests and I can live alone and be quite tranquil about it.*

Rather than determining what she remembers, the religious programme *Songs of Praise* provides her with a structured space in which to engage with her memories in the place of a church service which she is physically unable to participate in. In doing this she is also able to regulate remembering so as not to let the upsetting experience of traumatic memories described in the second extract, leach into her everyday activities or imaginative space.

Recorded music as a form that necessarily exists in the public domain as a cultural text means that it is subject to the structures of public and historical time is different ways to other cultural texts, yet its position with these structures is always subject to change as it is realised through and therefore always contingent on the changing relationships between public and private time. This is evident in Louise's discussion of the of the *Beach Boys*.

> **Louise**: *Umm and something that my husband bought the last couple of years. And that really made me laugh because I said 'y'know we didn't listen to the 'Beach Boys', we didn't buy 'Beach Boys' albums' and he said 'I know but it was always there in the background'. If we were up at Dunelm house which was sort of the student union place, y'know it was always there and I said y'know 'its mad, you're being nostalgic for somebody else's youth'. But when you put it on there is that umm, 'Good Vibrations', and you think 'oh yeah, oh yeah, ok I'm right back in the sixties'. So it is very evocative.*

Despite not being a feature of her experiential memory, Louise is able to use the Beach Boys music in the process of sensuously evoking a sense of period. The reasons for not listening to the *Beach Boys* in her youth (potentially to do with their pejorative association with formulaic, manufactured music) are deferred in favour of the *Beach Boys* association with the 1960s. As it moves through time, the temporal associations of music as a cultural text shift from personal memory into cultural memory and history, emphasising how the mnemonic potential of music is personally, culturally and historically contingent.

The reciprocal contingency of personal and public time is echoed in Rani's viewing of her personal photographs.

> **Rani**: *I've got loads of photographs but I've got one in particular. Really old. But it's probably quite a good reflection on how I was as a child. That's not my house that's my, um, I think I was six there I'm not too sure. And that's one of my cousins. I was in their house. It was kind of typical, mother working in a factory, working on factory clothes in the background, real kind of seventies picture. Things don't look like that now at all. I used to go to their house a lot to watch Bollywood movies because again mother and father were quite strict on the TV as well, like,*

> *you were reading or you were doing your homework, you're not watching TV. And I used to go to their house and I used to get the times wrong. Mum used to say come back by three o'clock and I never knew the times.*

Alongside Rani's personal memories of events in her childhood runs a broader sense of period. The aesthetic codes of the image speak to a public account of the ambience and stylistic characteristics of the 1970s period. Rani's remembering occurs interdependently at a cultural level in her evocation of the 1970s as a temporal aesthetic, socially in terms of her familial circumstances, and personally in her actions and personal feelings in and about that past, unified in the narration of the image.

Public Time and Cultural Resources

At different times and in different ways, the participants used public cultural texts as resources in their personal remembering activities. The conventions of these publicly circulating textual representations of time and temporality infused the women's talk at a discursive level. Louise uses the distinction between the televisual and filmic devices of monochrome and Technicolor in narrating her experience of the 1950s and 1960s.

> **Louise**: *In the fifties you didn't have any money but then there was nothing to buy, y'know? And suddenly in the sixties there was lots of, of cheap, cheap, fun colourful...y'know. The, the fifties were black and white. The sixties were psychedelic. The sixties were glorious Technicolor. Y'know? Everything was bright. And my mum used to, oh, decorate all the time. Just wanted bright colours and um, um she, yes even when we were still living in the pre-fab, we moved out of there when I was about nine or ten. Perhaps it was when my mum went back to work and we could afford to move. But even before we moved there, I remember her buying cheap cane furniture with bright coloured cushions on it, because it y'know it was just...and um some dreadful shiny Japanese print wall paper that she put up. Because it was y'know, because you could, it was. It was great. Unequivocally, it was terrific. Because suddenly everything seemed to be new and fresh and lively and designed for my generation. I'm sure my mum found that. My mum took the second world war ever so personally. She thought Hitler did it just to annoy her y'know. Cos she was 17 when it started, and when it finished she was a married woman with a child and living in a pre-fab and getting by on y'know...And she felt she didn't have a youth really. Umm it was just, y'know, a time of constant anxiety and Hull was heavily bombed and my dad was in the services and I think she thought we were very lucky and we were, we were [in the sixties]. Umm it was great fun and it was a time when you did feel that you could do anything and the world was going to be a better place and we were going to change everything.*

There are several dimensions to the use of Louise's distinction. Firstly it signifies the centrality of media systems of representations as frameworks of understanding for memories of personal experience. The contrast of colour and monochrome is used to narrate her experience of the 1960s as a period of time when she experienced previously unheard-of freedoms in aesthetic and literal terms. She brings together memories of lived experience and cultural memory intertwining them in the narrative. This is not to suggest that the shift from monochrome to Technicolor in any one medium maps onto Louise's temporal distinctions between the nineteen fifties and sixties. Technicolor was being widely used in 1930s Hollywood film and animation and television programmes did not begin to be broadcast in colour until the very late 1960s. Rather than this aesthetic shift being literally tied to the historical transitions involved in this period of time, Louise is using them symbolically as devices which signify a sense of pastness in the case of monochrome and modernity in the contemporary sense in the case of Technicolor, relating closely to Paul Grainge's (2002) assertion that 'black and white has become an idiom of visual pastness, an aesthetic of memory' (p.3). It casting the 1960s in Technicolor she locates it in a direct continuous relation with the present, as part of a contemporarily relevant modern age, within which she situates herself.

Secondly, not only is Louise articulating public systems of historical representation with personal memory, but is using public conventions of representation to construct a common generational relationship to the past. Her reference to her generation suggests that this period of time was experienced similarly by all the young people at that time. This acts rhetorically to legitimate her experience by signalling its universal nature but is also significant in highlighting the centrality of a sense of generation in remembering a particular period of time within the broad construct of the decade. Louise actively constructs a generation in her talk in the bringing together of her personal perspective defined by her age and the socio-cultural conditions of the period, which in conjunction contribute to a sense of shared aesthetic experience and interpretative frameworks. Interestingly, her sense of generation is not exclusively formed by her own experience of a particular period of time. Rather her sense of generation is defined by the relationship between the period of her teenaged experience in juxtaposition with a perception of the period of time and the way it was experienced, that preceded it. Louise is engaging in the retrospective evocation of what Christopher Bollas (1993) terms 'generational consciousness' which is a potential space in which collective experience and perspective can be articulated (p.265). This is achieved in her narration of temporally specific cultural artefacts, or 'generational objects' (p.255), which 'yield a sense of (our own) generational time...and that upon recollection brings him a sense of his own generation' (p.260).

This particular temporal construction is not rhetorically neutral. Louise is actively constructing the period in which she was young as a vibrant, golden age, emphasising the break with the past and the seemingly limitless potential which then arose. In this sense she is engaging in nostalgia. In terms of the narrative's melancholic potential, the idealistic descriptions she employs leave the present inevitably lacking in its wake. However, in the construction of this idealised time as one of newness and potential, utopian possibilities remain implicit in the narrative. In Bollas's (1993) conception of generational consciousness, the cannibalistic nature of generational procreativity makes the retrospective consideration of one's youth inevitably one of mourning as those generational objects have in both literal and semantic terms a short lifespan. Despite this, the mourning characteristic of this generational consciousness necessarily refers to a peak time of generational productivity and creativity, foregrounding potential and the thrill of the new. In this sense, the inherently forward-oriented trajectory of this remembering, precludes a retreat into melancholia, always retaining, however small, the spark of hope and transformation. This generational remembering then captures the twin orientations of nostalgia: past and present, loss and renewal, despair and hope.

As well as enabling an articulation of a generational consciousness, public representations of the past enabled the women to engage with those periods outside of the formative years of their own generation. In one instance, Louise used a literary public text in her own mnemonic activity as a source of cultural information about the seventies which she felt she had little public involvement in.

> **Louise**: *That's the other thing that I've got recently, I watched the* Rotter's club, *which was about... it was a sort of rights of passage thing, I've read the book since, it's very good. But that was about people who were sort of ten years younger than me growing up in the seventies and it was, y'know, it was really interesting to read actually, cos I'm thinking 'I missed all this'. I missed punk and y'know all the seventies things. I thought 'how interesting' cos I was just being mummy y'know and um, generations aren't twenty years, they're perhaps ten or perhaps even five. Y'know if you're five years away from somebody, in terms of music and the fashion and y'know it can be so different couldn't it?*

Not only can public texts evoke ones own generational consciousness, in a broader sense, they mark out the differences between generations, understood within the structures of public time. They provide the representational tools which can illuminate generational objects and tie them to a particular temporal context, generating for the reader or viewer a repository of cultural

resources to make sense of, if not share, those frameworks of meaning specific to people who came of age in times different to one's own.

Public historical texts served very practical mnemonic uses in a social context. This was particularly so in regard to intra-generational communication. The consumption of specific cultural artefacts, due to their limited shelf life and close correspondence to particular generational experiences, creates shared repositories of popular cultural knowledge.

> **Rachel:** *Anybody who I meet who is my generation, the first thing you'll have in common is all of this common ground of our past. Whether it was the goodies on TV, I was talking to someone the other day about* The Goodies, *because Bill Oddie was on this, in fact it was my boyfriend Terry, we were watching* Gardeners World *on Sunday morning and I said 'look, Bill Oddie' and he'd say 'yeah' and I said 'do you remember when he used to be in* The Goodies. *And that was 1970s and someone of your generation would not know the Goodies unless you'd seen a re-run. There was a children's programme, it's even down right down to children's TV, it was few and far between when I was a child, but everybody I know of my generation knows* Bill and Ben the Flower Pot Men *and* Trumpton *and* The Clangers *and* The Soup Dragon *and all this sort of thing. It's what you have in common with people. And when you're in relationships and you're talking to people, that is something that is common ground and does become very important. Like with my previous partner, cos he was only eight years younger, there was so much we didn't have in common and it was really quite odd. And even things like values are different in different generations. I had this conversation with Kerry last night about children and the way they're brought up and say, the responsibility of parenting, that the responsibility for parenting is completely different now to when I was a child or when I brought my children up. It's not that long ago. I'm only 43. But it's very different from generation to generation, how things change, how moral responsibility changes, all sorts of things.*

In both Rachel's extract and Louise's discussion of a holiday in Madeira on page 120), the use of public representations of or from the past are central to the enactment of their contemporary relationships. The discussion of generational objects is a vast resource for communication between those of similar ages. For Louise, it affirms her and her husband's shared past and shared aesthetic values and provides them with common interests creating a communicative intimacy. Rachel illustrates how these cultural objects can go beyond the provision of topics of conversations and shared meanings, in providing clues to the likelihood of sharing less obvious cultural values such as moral responsibility for parenting. Shared generational objects are tied to a generational framework of meaning and perception, suggesting that meanings generated from particular temporal texts can allude to other less tangible shared meanings or perspectives. This use of generational objects not only involves the building or a shred collective temporal perspective but involves the exclusion of others as

'other' generations. Rachel illustrates this in her talk of a previous younger partner who did not share her popular cultural memories and by extension, the social value systems that are associated with her particular cultural perspective.

Ann utilises public historical texts in a familial context, placing particular importance on specific aspects of the past which have a direct relation to the shared memory of her own family.

> **Ann**: *I come from quite a military background. My granddad was in the Air Force, my dad was in the Air Force, and my mum for a few years. So I've got all that sort, military sort of ideas. But I did history at school too. So I think that's where a lot of it's come from. Cos I know kids these days, you see in the paper, don't know anything about the war...I think like all these programmes that they show like 'Peoples War' and all that sort of stuff. Especially nowadays because people watch so much TV and that's going to be the only way that they can do it really. Yeah, they're just wanting people's memories aren't they? They're trying to get people to write in with memories and things like that, which I think it just preserves that history. Because I guess for anybody, there's any books and things, people go to these journals and go back to all these journals to how these wars happened and those sort of things, so I guess if they don't preserve these memories, they'll get lost.*

Ann is using public temporal representations in several ways. She emphasises the importance of remembering conflicts, particularly the second world war and in doing so legitimates the occupational trend of her own family. The sense made from cultural representations of the past depends largely on its relation to not only her own experience but to the shared memories of her family. Significantly, Ann talks in value neutral terms about television's representational codes, suggesting that television literally 'preserves' memory rather that actively constructing and reconstructing it in very particular ways. This can be seen as alluding to a relative coherence between public constructions of the past and Ann's shared familial memories. However this also obscures the relations of power implicit in the codified representation and naturalises what should be remembered, in particular ways, by particular people.

Other participants retained and engaged with the contingent qualities of public time and personal memory rather than obscuring them. This was most clearly seen when public texts were used in mnemonically imaginative ways, going beyond interpreting them as objective sources of historical information from the perspective of the present but as points from which the past can be subjectively explored. Sarah's talk about her imagined excursions on Carnaby Street, and attending 1960s music festivals derived from her parent's

retrospective talk about their experience of the 1960s (p.111) illustrates personal mnemonic imaginings in her use of public texts. Susan self consciously articulates this at a more abstract level:

> **Interviewer**: *What about media representation of the past?*
> **Susan**: *I don't think you could take in all the complications. You might get some sophisticated education ones. But we couldn't take it all in its context. You've got to simplify it because we live in a nation when you've got to put things on television in small batches...They're just not very accurate generally. And I know some of it is just a big con and they do sort of... they do so many tricks with photography. I quite enjoy the illusion of what the Victorian age was and periods before then. But I know damn well it was nothing like that at all, but it's wonderful entertainment. You're just being fooled. They do get some of the recent stuff not too bad. It all depends who's doing it and what perspective. Often it's someone with a middle-class perspective. If it's working-class they aren't always tied in or because the producer thinks it looks better or I don't know, they never seem to get them quite true.*
> **Interviewer**: *When you see things like that does it refer you back to your own...*
> **Susan**: *Oh yes it does, and you compare a bit and you shouldn't compare they're completely different. You can't judge them on that because they were different people looking at it from a different album.*

Susan demonstrates a keen sensitivity, not only to the historical specificity of particular experiences and memories of them, but the particular class perspectives that representations are drawn from in terms of what they represent and the way representations are constructed. She allows for both identification with, and rejection of historical representations, potentially simultaneously, in the consumption process, and is fully acceptant of the existence of multiple and possibly conflicting representations circulating at any one time. She uses her personal memory critically to interpellate public constructions of the past but simultaneously notes that enjoyment and inaccuracy are not mutually exclusive, and that their seemingly irreparable contradictoriness can be overcome in their-self conscious identification.

Importantly, Susan uses the metaphor of the photograph album to explain the different subject positions from which historical representations are constructed. In doing so she recognises that it is not only representations of the past that are social constructs but that the very perspectives from which they created are partial and subjective. In this statement she highlights the absence of one true past against which representations can be measured, actively rejecting the claims of public representations of the past to truth and accuracy. This does not prevent Susan making value judgements of the representations of the past but she does so in self-conscious recognition of her own partiality. It also suggests that in the absence of a 'true' past against which to measure representations, they must be judged according to

different criteria. Although not explicated by Susan directly, from her resistance to judging representations on one's experience of the past, it can be reasonably inferred that a more salient criteria for judgement would be the value of that text and its meanings in the present. This is supported by her relativistic notion of poverty:

> **Susan**: *Poverty is relative to the age you live in. You can be poor even with a telly. It's no use saying 'in the past we didn't have this that and the other' (sarcastic voice) because nobody did! It makes me cross when people do that, because flipping heck, nobody did so what did it matter.*

Unexpectedly, the use of public texts in mnemonic activity was not restricted to those texts which make explicit historical reference:

> **Grace**: *I don't watch any soaps at all. I look at the news four or five times a day until I know it off by heart really. And I like period dramas. I like good acting.*
> **Interviewer**: *What is it that you like about period dramas?*
> **Grace**: *I like the leisurely attitude to life of the period dramas. What was on last night?* Midsomer Murders. *That takes you into the countryside and village life. Those sorts of things. But these modern programmes drive me batty. There's not one soap that I look at.*
> **Interviewer**: *Could you explain about period dramas a bit more?*
> **Grace**: *Its like a way of life as it was. Although there were two classes then. And I'm a mixture of both.*

Rather than referring to a television programme that explicitly refers to the past, Grace makes reference to *Midsomer Murders* which is set in the present day. This could be understood as a misidentification of the temporal setting of the programme, but more likely is that Grace identifies the particular cultural values of the programme as rooted in the past. *Midsomer Murders* is set in a fictional English rural idyll and draws heavily from the conventional 'whodunit' genre popular in the golden age of detective fiction in the early part of the 20th century, perhaps most famously epitomised by Agatha Christie's novels featuring 'Miss Marple' and 'Hercule Poirot'. *Midsomer Murders* features almost exclusively white cast, traditional class distinctions pervade and structure the narrative although explicit poverty is meticulously evaded. Stylised versions of pre-war sensibilities and cogent constructions of conservative norms implicated by their murderous transgression are central to the narrative and aesthetic codes of the programme. Grace not only feels these norms are desirable but are also being lost, a feeling which is further explained in her talk about ethnic minorities in Britain and her perception of a loss of national character. The incarnation of cultural memory in the form of particular conservative cultural values is the point of historical identification for Grace, however fictional those values may have been in their lived experience. In this sense,

public texts are not only temporalised in their specific historical content but also in the codes and conventions they employ which come into being in the decoding process.

The points of identification between public texts and personal pasts are not fixed but contingent on the context of their consumption at any given point in time. Lillian's pleasure in viewing *Anita and Me* is derived, not from a representation resonant with her own experience of a past time, but in the recognition of that period itself.

> **Lillian**: *I'm trying to think of the 80s. Things like Meera Syal, you know* Anita and Me. *That was quite interesting, although it was a different, a kind of very different atmosphere from my experience, there was still kind of certain things about it that you kind of recognised.*

Although Lillian locates *Anita and Me* as set in the 1980s, it was actually set in the early 1970s, the central appeal for Lillian is the recognition of period rather than addressing any particular experience of it. Lillian's personal investment in the representation is small but her pleasure in consuming the text as a representation of a period, replete with temporal markers such as popular cultural artefacts fills the void left by the limitations of experiential memory. Here pleasure is derived from a purely temporal recognition rather than an experientially grounded identification with the content of the text. Representations of the past are able to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles of perspective with the appeal to a particular generational aesthetic, articulated through the use of popular cultural texts which universalise the appeal of ethnic- class- and gender- specific representations, contributing to the construction of periodised symbolic repositories.

Pleasure can also be derived from the recognition of a past as one desires it to have been rather than as it was lived. Louise takes pleasure in recognising the 1960s represented in *Our Friends in the North* despite the fact that, given her life narrative, she experienced very little of the hardships and radical politics encountered by the characters.

> **Louise**: *One thing I did see which I thought did it very well was* Our Friends in the North *and that was, I though 'yes they got that, got that just right' yeah. I thought that was excellently well done. And I did think they hit just the right period feel but no, I don't watch much telly.*

Rather Louise may see her desired fantasies of the meaning of the period represented in the programme. Although her personal concerns were marriage and pregnancy and child rearing, she talks extensively in the interview about the socialist heritage of her and her husband's family and her desires for this to continue in following generations:

> **Louise**: *My husband's family particularly I remember had very much a union background. Very much concerned about worker's rights and, and (pause) social justice, which was very important to them. Having grown up in the, during the depression during the twenties and having seen so much poverty, they felt very strongly about social justice. About wanting better for their own children and wanting, as we talked about before, about security. And you can see how each generation does carry forward the ideal, and the um (pause) and the prejudices and everything else that they pick up in their childhood. And I think I can see it in my own parents and I can see it in myself. That's the way it works. And certainly I want my children and my grandchildren to know their background.*
>
> **Louise**: *Um, and, and one, my closest friend, when she talks about doing* The Telegraph *crossword – 'Oh dear, I'm a* Guardian *person, what happened, you know' Umm, how are you doing the* Telegraph *crossword. Not my idea of a good time.*

Public representations of the past provide a sense of continuation and relation between her own experiences of the seventies and those that under different circumstances she would desired to have had. Beyond this it also allows Louise to validate historically her sense of a political self. Rather than seeing her life as a wife and mother as a break in the familial tradition of socialism, she is able to engineer a continuous socialist past in a weaving together of social family memory, her own experience and public representations of the past.

Private Reflection: Mnemonic Imagination and Nostalgia

Women's uses of public narratives and cultural resources in order to make sense of the past are clearly diverse and specific to their particular lived experiences. However, attention must equally be paid to the private ways of making sense of the past and present and the relationship between them. These involve the ways women reflect on the past and bring into their consciousness. Although this is necessarily individual, similarities and patterns in the ways in which the past was conjured in the minds of the participants emerged through their narration of these ways of thinking and feeling the past.

Throughout the interviews women consistently blended and blurred memories with future aspirations and alternative possibilities available to them in the past. This creative process of remembering seemed to lie in the middle ground between remembering an experienced past as we would conventionally recognise it, and imagining potential or unachieved experiences or possibilities based on the past but resonant with hope for the future. This is best described as a mnemonic imagination.

> **Interviewer**: *How does that contrast with memories that might be evoked through music?*
> **Susan**: *Sometimes more sadness. Almost as if, I wish I hadn't got married, I wish I'd done other things, there's a bigger world out there and I feel I could have done a lot more with it. But looking back I didn't do bad.*

Susan uses the imaginative space created by music and its mnemonic associations in active conjunction, allowing her to fantasise about what might have been, what other life she could have led. This also allows her to imaginatively escape the patriarchal pressures under which her life has been lived, sliding from beneath them, if only for the length of the reverie, by naming and identifying certain roads not taken. The pleasure of fantasy and the melancholy of opportunities not taken are evoked together in a complex emotional experience.

Rani talks about a similar experience of remembering and future-oriented imagining:

> **Rani**: *So when I do listen to that music it makes me feel a bit sad and disappointed with myself because I know I could do a lot more. Do you know what I mean? And I just think, where was that kind of vibrant, y'know? Yes, I'm still vibrant, but where was that real vibrant passionate child? Where has that gone to now? I feel like it's kind of lost a little bit. It's there, I just think it's stagnating a little bit. I feel a bit sort of suppressed because of that. That's how it makes me feel. It makes me feel like oh I wonder if I will ever do anything with my music or my talent, or with dancing, will I do anything? And part of me just can see a closed door. I can see myself looking forward to dancing and singing in terms of a hobby, but in terms of a career? I still think there's space, I still think there's space...*

Music evokes not only memories of childhood but positions her as a continuous self, extending through time, existing at once with things that could happen as well as things that have happened. Music helps her rove back and forth through time and between times. She experiences the music as the child in her memory and also as her contemporary self, setting up continuities of perception between past and present. She can imagine the qualities she felt she had as a child, the same perspective on dancing bound up in the listening experience, extending into the present and, in its continuous trajectory, into the future, the yet-to-be-entered realm that is for now accessible only through imagination, dream and fantasy. In connecting remembered pasts with imagined futures, she is able to identify the social conventions preventing her achieving her desired life course. This mnemonic imagination is the site not only of the pleasure of fantasy, but also of the experimental linking of past, present and future selves. Continuity of self is experienced at its most intense, making this realm of fantasy and possibility inextricable from lived experience, allowing it to perform as a site which generates potential transformations in the real as well as imaginary spheres.

Photography as a technology that necessarily objectifies that which it depicts impacts on women's affective relation to images and in turn seems to provide less room for imagination to be involved in constructing the past. Although never precluding it absolutely, the explicitness of the photographic image inhibits fantasy and imagination in thinking about the past as the remembering act is tied to the visual representation of the referent and the indexical belief in it. However, photography is not always bound by a cultural investment in indexicality. Meera's use of her photographs of her mother to give thanks to her mother for her own life necessarily involves the use of imagination in bringing forth her mothers role in her childhood and the poverty her parents suffered before she can experientially remember. The iconic use of photography may therefore support mnemonic imaginings other than those bound in an indexical relationship with their subject.

Music, in contrast to photography, does not objectify its relationship to a given past, which themselves only exist in the mind of the listener. This provides a flexibility and freedom, retaining the intensity of feeling generated by allowing a continuity of the listener's subjectivity. The listener of the past can be experienced as the listener of the present. The past is not encoded into the text in explicit terms, so temporal difference can be transcended or at least elided, intensifying the remembering experience through the unification of past and present in the ear of the listener. Francesca found music more useful in evoking her memories of her own life experience for this reason. She makes specific reference to the limitations photographs impose on the knowledge of the past.

> **Francesca**: *If I wasn't well I might get them out and look through some happy moments. I think I have got a good memory though you see, cos even photos that don't, that look happy, I remember what went on around them. They aren't always the image that presents itself in a photo.*

After having undergone psychoanalysis in order to make sense of her mother's mental health problems that resulted from an accident, the explanations and meanings she has made from the past are perhaps not explicitly reflected in her childhood photographs. As discrete images they resemble more closely what she calls her 'fragmented childhood', rather than the desirable fluid narrative she generated in the process of her therapy. Her desire to distance herself from this fragmentation is emphasised in her use of the third person when referring to her childhood experience:

> **Francesca**: *So, having a sister who'd been through the same thing, it verifies things for you. Otherwise how does a child manage that sort of stuff? They get by, they just manage.*

By contrast she finds music more amenable to evoking the past as she understands it from her present perspective:

> **Francesca**: *Then those years weren't all terrible, miserable tragic years. I've got really good memories of some of it. And some of the bits that are really good memories are songs. And I can have a, if there's ever anything on the telly like old songs, I say to my husband 'right don't tell me which year it is, I'm going to guess, I'm going to put myself back, I use my memory then you see so I can picture myself listening to Radio Luxembourg or at a youth club dance or whatever and um, its just a way of amusing myself, 'Umm, 1956'. Its my little challenge.*

Not only does Francesca find music useful in its accommodation of her reformulated understandings of her childhood, but she also uses her knowledge of music's temporal markers, such as dates songs were released as a way of confirming the accuracy of her memory, helping to legitimate her new understandings of the past.

Photography's limitation of mnemonic imagination is not always problematic. Where remembering with music can be dangerously intense, emotionally charged and all-consuming in the imaginative freedoms it provides, photography allows the remembering agent to remain, to varying degrees, in control.

> **Jenny**: *I think music is a very emotional thing and the emotions that it draws on, it triggers. Whereas a photograph, to me, you kind of remember things that were said or things that happened. More specific things rather than what it felt like. Sometimes you can just feel that feeling without making it specific. Yeah, I mean with the photos it's almost like having a conversation, y'know its like you're with that person again. With a photograph, I picture things in my mind. Either that happened or what would he say now. Imagine it. With music you just feel it.*
> **Interviewer**: *So it's more about sensations?*
> **Jenny**: *Yeah*
> **Interviewer**: *Do you prefer one of them?*
> **Jenny**: *Well they're really different. I do seem to have these conversations in my head with people. People from the past...which is, I suppose in a way, I'm in control of that, because you can stop it when your imagination decides (pause) I'll stop imagining that, whereas music is there, even if you turn it off it's still there effectively so, in that sense, its more powerful I suppose. I don't know. I find them both useful for different reasons (pause). But I mean, sometimes it just happens. Something comes on the radio unexpectedly. It's hard to get*

> *rid of... I do quite a lot of crying. I find it hard not even when I don't want to. It's not always bad, sometimes it's just an overwhelming-ness.*

In this extract Jenny highlights that different mnemonic technologies can be self-consciously utilised for different purposes but also that there is a need to regulate imaginative mnemonic activity. Although she uses photographs as a springboard into imagined conversations with people from her past, she is able to stop this when she desires by removing the images from sight. Where particularly meaningful music can emerge unbidden from the car radio, photograph albums can be perused but then always returned to the shelf when the affective response to them threatens to overwhelm.

Mnemonic imagination can be enacted independently of domestic mnemonic technologies. Lillian talks about a particular period of time in which she has imagined herself based solely on information about the period gleaned from institutional and public sources.

> **Lillian**: *It's funny, you always kind of imagine yourself to be slightly different when you do that [think about other epochs]. I always think, when I was at university, I did a lot on the Weimar Republic in Germany in the 1920s and I always thought that would have been a really exciting place, you know to live in Berlin. There was so much change going on and there was lots of things going on in the theatre and you always imagine that you're going to be a mover and a shaker don't you, and you'll be there at the Cabaret and George Grosz will be sketching you or whatever. So I think that kind of appeals to me but I think that's largely because you know I kind of got in to the whole thing. I did a whole dissertation about German theatre at the time and everything and I think because I got so into it, well I suppose I got so into it because I really liked the appeal of that era. I'm not quite sure why but it seemed very, there was a lot going on and a lot of questioning going on and a lot of changes in society. So I always kind of fancied that.*

Lillian resituates herself in relation to her knowledge of Weimar Germany, attempting imaginatively to experience those aspects of the past which she find appealing. She draws on cultural information and inserts herself into this mnemonic narrative, exploring potential subject positions and their affective experience. She fuses the visual and the sonic imaginatively to construct a 'lived in' holistic experience of the period, which in its sensuous intensity and detailed specificity defies claims of a generalised sense of pastness cited by Jameson (1991) as the successor of social and cultural memory. It could be argued that this form of imagining as a pleasurable indulgence is in fact a regressive rejection of the present in favour of the past. This would be unwarranted pessimism. Here Lillian self-consciously critiques her imaginings, acknowledging that the subject position she chooses for herself is not one necessarily grounded in an actual past. She also foregrounds the importance of the

progressive values of the imagined period. Far from a reactionary loss of faith in progress, Lillian finds this past period a source of that very inspiration to move forward.

The phenomenological experience of mnemonic imagining is neither pure fantasy nor the wholesale regurgitation of experience. This experience does not rely on the remembering of time past as we would commonsensically think of it, it is rather a re-imagining of experiences, fusing the recalled experience, desired pasts and desired futures in one mnemonic activity.

Alongside the mnemonic imagination, nostalgia as mode of private remembering emerges as a central way for women to engage with the past. Nostalgia as a particular way of relating to the past can also be interpreted as permeated with the politics of gender. Nostalgia as it was originally conceptualised as a desire for home, has definite gender implications. Rubenstein (2001) has argued that the desire for home maps onto a desire for idealised motherhood in her connection of home and the maternal figure. In this sense, nostalgia is intimately related to a feminisation of the past and, in popular contemporary discourse, is rendered reactionary in doing so. This link between a melancholic nostalgic longing and femininity is, in places, made in the interviews. Rachel's link between 'soppy' and romantic memory and being a 'proper girl' (p.160-161) and Sarah's talk about her own sentimentalism (p.161) seem to suggest that women are expected to remember in an idealistic or sentimentalised manner which is contrasted in other interviews with masculine 'logical', 'clear' remembering (Susan).

However, the participants' articulations of nostalgia and longing for an imagined time-space of home was rather more complex than some of the claims regarding gendered remembering may suggest. Nostalgia as a complex fusion of melancholy and utopia in the face of loss and lack, potential and change, (as conceived in chapter 3) was a feature of many of the women's narratives.

Louise demonstrates perhaps the closest to unqualified longing in the research.

> **Louise**: *But photographs of my own children just make me want to cry now. Oh I miss them. I miss them being children. I miss them being little. And it makes me feel really sad. I want them, I want them back, when they were small. It was a lovely time... Nostalgia for me is, just goes back to what I was saying earlier, nostalgia for me is about my children. And about my young children. And I'm sure it is, nostalgia in the true sense is a sort of rosy glow, everything was wonderful. It was always summer. Um. And I, that's a period about which I feel most weepy and*

> *nostalgic, oddly is not my own experience, but their experience. You know I feel nostalgic for their childhood. It was such a revelation to me, how wonderful it was, being a parent and what a joy they were.*

Louise longs for a time when the identity in which she had the most investment, motherhood, was still as resonant now as it was then. She longs for a renewed dependence on her by her children, allowing her to again enact the maternal ideal. This is regressive as it draws her away from finding other viable sources of self-worth and retains the importance of motherhood as a sense of self when her familial circumstances have moved on. It maintains a gap between a sense of self defined by a past mothering role and her contemporary lived experience, opening a void of discontent and melancholy.

In contrast Sarah used nostalgic imaginings of the sixties to orientate herself to progressive political values and to critique the way those values are reconstructed in the present.

> **Sarah**: *You know that nostalgic, positive view about things [about the 1960s]. There was that re-awakening and y'know the youth culture coming to life and all of those things. But again the sixties stuff, because retro is so fashionable all the time and it will always be regurgitated and you know, I've been to shops recently and they've brought out new lines in Beatles stuff and Elvis stuff and y'know and I'm dubious about that because who is making money from it now and it starts to become less unique and more formulaic and actually they're not remembering the reality of the new, the excitement. So it depends, there's so many different influences aren't there now? It depends where you look to decide how it's being represented.*
> **Interviewer**: *Do you have a lot of sixties music?*
> **Sarah**: *Yeah. Yeah definitely. I mean stuff that I've nicked from mum and dad. And just that I buy now. I mean Simon's very into music as well and he's got a lot of sixties stuff.*
> **Interviewer**: *And it's stuff that you listen to now?*
> **Sarah**: *I'd say so yeah. And not just pop, rock and roll. Perhaps Reggae and stuff that was coming out from other cultural influences as well... [In the band] we always have to talk about cultural influences because you know, we've all got different music tastes in a sense and so we're always bringing different things together and we'll talk about what we've heard on the radio or something we've listened to that we haven't listened to for ages and we'll sometimes play each other music and say isn't this fantastic and I'd love to do something with a bit of a beat like this or let's write a song a bit like a Blondie song or y'know, so it is an inspiration and you re-evoke the feeling of that song.*

Sarah fuses an appreciation of a positive past with a critique of the present resulting in a sensitive appreciation of youth cultural values in the 1960s. She is not suggesting that the past can be grafted into a present context and retain its meaning and remain sensitive to the

specificity of historical contexts. She finds inspiration in the newness of the experience of the 1960s cultural revolution and suggests that rather than regurgitating the cultural products of the sixties we should be harnessing the utopian ideas to generate new and innovative cultural forms. This is something she expresses and utilises in her contemporary music, highlighting the potential utility of nostalgia in activity in the present and future, driving rather than prohibiting change and historical understanding.

Mukta uses nostalgic remembering of a happy period of her youth as a method of imaginatively balancing a very difficult recent past characterised largely by her own illness and that of her eldest son.

> **Mukta**: *Umm, we were a big family. When I got married in Mombassa, my husband had four brothers. He is the fifth one. Four brother's and three sister's. Everybody was married except my younger brother in law, but we all used to eat together. It was very, very nice. Very enjoyable. And I stayed there for about five and a half years. And they are the most beautiful years of my life. The most beautiful. I still remember sometimes and I would like to go back (laugh). But you know, life doesn't come back. Those days are gone. They are gone. But anyway, we have got to be thankful to God that he gave us...he gives us a balance. So that you go in line, you see? There are days you feel good, there are days you feel bad and so this is it.*

She combines this with a religious rhetoric to create a framework that is characterised by the notion of balance between good and bad times in order to make sense of her experience overall. Nostalgia doesn't occur in a social vacuum and its enactment is dependent not only on gender but on other socio-cultural factors as well. The review of a positive past – longed for but recognised as lost – reinvigorates her zest for the present rather than diminishing it. Despite being an embodiment of loss and longing, nostalgic remembering is a source of pleasure. In naming loss it becomes bearable, enabling action to remedy it.

Jenny expresses nostalgic remembering as a combination of melancholic and utopian feelings.

> **Jenny**: *London has changed completely from when I was there, because when I grew up in Clapham, it was quite a uh, ummm, quite a nice sort of community kind of place. You knew everybody living on the street and you used to play barefoot in the street and stuff and you just can't do that anymore, it's like it's really changed, because of the house prices and things, you have to be really well off to live there and it wasn't like that when we were there y'know, so it's just a really different people there and really different feel to it. So if I walked down my old road, which I*

> *have done, I don't have, I don't feel it belongs to me any more because there's no family home there, there's no sort of root for me there. But there's still this thing about London, because that's where we were born and (pause) I've never felt the same about any other place, y'know? Yeah, so I have an affinity with London, or maybe an idea of London that doesn't exist anymore. Um, that only exists in my memory... But no, I don't feel that I... In a way it's liberating because I don't feel attached to any one place other than this place in my memory which isn't there, so in a sense I could go anywhere. And travelling is one of the things I love to do the most.*

Although there are conservative elements such as the narrative of decline of the area of London in which she grew up, the self-conscious recognition of nostalgia (although not named as such) as a longing for a place that no longer exists is in fact liberating. The security of the memory comes in its being unattainable. This unattainability of a maternal temporal-spatial home not only liberates her from the pain of unfulfilled desire but also disconnects her from the essentialist idealisation of a maternal nature. Although it would be presumptuous to suggest this liberating view of nostalgic loss precipitated Jenny's radical independence and antipathy towards traditional domestic roles, when seen in the context of these features of her experience, it does seem like this interpretation of nostalgia complements an abandonment and critique of essentialised and traditional gender identities. Nostalgia as a mode of remembering actively mediates between loss and anticipation rather than always existing as one or the other.

As we have already seen, Louise engages in resolutely melancholic nostalgia although this is not to the exclusion of more progressive forms. She engages nostalgically with the past though her participation in the *Friends Reunited* website.

> **Louise**: *I suppose if you're talking about memory and nostalgia, you've got to talk about* Friends Reunited *haven't you? And, you know the pull of that. Just wanting to know what had happened to people. Just to, out of curiosity wanting to know what's happened to them, do they, the girls I grew up with, and um getting back in touch with them. I would actually like to, we all keep saying we should meet up but we're all a bit scared. Um but yes, to get back in touch with those people (pause) it's really good. But it does make you realise that you're a different person. Um and yeah, there's sort of a nostalgia for that person I used to be, but I feel like I....certainly no-one I was at school with would have expected my life to take the turn it has. They wouldn't have expected me to turn into an Earth Mother. I was the bolshy one you know. I was the sparky one. And although I shouldn't say it, the star of my year, I was the one that was going places. (Laugh) I'm notably different. I think one of the things that saves me from it, nostalgia, is that I still feel that there is a lot more to come.*

In emphasising how she has changed she is also highlighting how she has moved forward through time in a positive way, maintaining rather than collapsing temporal difference. Rather than participating in *Friends Reunited* to indulge in an undifferentiated longing for an inaccessible past, Louise uses it as an affirmation of her progress. The pleasure she takes in remembering herself as a school girl in no way detracts from the progressiveness of the narrative; pleasure and desire remain distinct. The two different forms of nostalgia which Louise engages in highlights the temporal and social contingency of nostalgic remembering.

The way nostalgia is articulated by the participant is central to the way women construct themselves as social agents, prohibiting the dismissal of nostalgia as either inherently 'conservative and reactionary' or as an 'uncomplicated site of utopian dreams' (Giles, 2002: 28-9). Where nostalgia is performed as an articulation of loss without a future orientation, the fluid development and continuous change of gendered identities is prevented. Where nostalgia orients itself towards the present or future as well as the past, the capacity for change and development is returned. Nostalgia can be both melancholic and utopian to varying degrees in different temporal, historical and social contexts.

Forgetting

Remembering cannot be examined without reference to its twin concept of forgetting which, like remembering, is subject to the imperatives of public and private time. The process of remembering requires a simultaneous forgetting to bring certain aspects of the past into the present at the expense of others. Forgetting needs to be qualified in several ways. Firstly, it must be noted that to forget an aspect of the past does not necessarily preclude the remembering of it at other points in time, as 'traces are not erased, but rather made inaccessible' (Ricoeur cited in Hannoum, 2000: 130). The shifting present makes continuingly changing demands on what we remember and consequently on what we forget. Some dimensions of our past may never become relevant to our present and therefore remain forgotten, but at moments of transition or change different aspects of the past come to the fore, formulated in the present as mnemonic narratives.

These processes of remembering and forgetting are not always simply or easily performed. The alternative needs and desires of others can create tensions in the dynamics of remembering and forgetting, generating conflict over the meaning of the past. Socially generated understandings of the past comes into conflict with individual remembering. Many of the participants detailed both the pleasure and conflict involved in interpersonal remembering and forgetting:

> **Jenny**: *I just know things are really different between family and friends, um y'know my family...families are weird (laugh) and I think families, because you always have a past with your family... I think your family relationships call up all sorts of things which really don't belong anymore and it can make it a lot more complicated. In my experience (laugh).*
> **Interviewer**: *Is talking or doing things related to the past then something that would come up in family settings?*
> **Jenny**: *It goes on but I hate it. I find it really irritating. I find it (pause). With friends actually, when that sort of things happens, I always think it's because they've run out of things to talk about. 'Do you remember when this happened, that happened' and you kind of think 'no'. I find it irritating and, with the family it can be irritating, but if it goes back far enough, it becomes really interesting again.*

For Jenny, the inability of her family members to forget is problematic as she feels it prevents her moving on with her life and opens a gulf between her personal sense of self and the way she suspects her family members perceive her. This illustrates an important point that remembering cannot be seen in a flawless set of structural relations. Conflict and contestation are manifest in interpersonal mnemonic relations as well as in individuals' imaginative experiences of personal memory.

Francesca's complex experiences of remembering her mother after a serious injury were indeed so conflicting and confused she sought professional psychoanalytic help to come to terms with her memories of their relationship:

> **Francesca**: *I think that's what my sister and I were doing in counselling and psychotherapy [grieving]. The truth is our mother was not the same person, therefore what we felt as children was very valid; that she was not our mother that came back. She looked like but the mother of our childhood wasn't there. That's what we needed to do. We'd been made to get on with our lives and pretend that everything was all right, pretend that...so we had to make sense of it much later on. So you put it on the back burner if you like, put it on the back burner while the children grow up, you don't have any pressing need to look at it and you're busy anyway. You think, oh it's all right, it's just one of those things. People do I'm sure, they think 'oh, I can get by, I can manage, I don't have to look at that uncomfortable memory'. But it's always there, lurking... Actually I got bored in the end, about thinking about it. I'm like 'why am I going back to this again, why am I revisiting this again, why are we talking through this again. Let's get on with life. Clear some space out'.*

Louise clearly demonstrates the pressing need for the past to cohere in narrative terms and for meaningful events to be identified and ordered. Without this, a temporal trajectory and coherent understanding of the relationship between past and present is impossible. So

fundamental is this need that where it is absent, our very sense of self and ability to act in the world is threatened.

In opposition to Jenny's desire for forgetting, Lillian finds her children's memories of their shared past are a very much a welcome supplement to her own:

> **Lillian**: *I suppose yeah, it is kind of a bonding kind of thing and I think you all go through this thing of thinking 'look how we've all changed' and how everybody's growing up and I think you can get, I think particularly with the kids because they go through phases when they're just horrible, you know and it's kind of an opportunity to look back and think 'oh yeah, she was going through, oh yeah, she's actually alright at the moment, do you remember that day she was absolutely foul?'. And you know, they do, they do go through these incredible phases and you see that and it puts in into context of the whole of that, that kind of balance. 'We are a happy family' (laugh). So it's quite interesting to see that. And what the kids remember as well, is often different to what you remember, so that's quite an eye opener as well. Yeah. And they're quite precise sometimes about their memories and things, more than I am.*

Lillian clearly positions her children's memory as a guard against forgetting. When taken in contrast to Louise's narrative, the delicate balance that women tread between too much memory and too little is brought into sharp relief. It is interesting that Jenny talks as a daughter or sister and talks about feelings of over-determination by family memory, where Lillian talks as a mother and finds the increasing volume of shared past brought into the present exclusively positive. This may flag up some of the complex relations between mothers and daughters in determining the identities of their children. Through the activity of remembering, the desire for familial cohesion as a mother and the desire for independence as a daughter are clearly in tension.

What is also implied in Lillian's tongue-in-cheek assertion that they '*are*' a happy family is that photography as a ritualised mnemonic technology insures against forgetting of the pleasure of family life. It legitimates its own existence in this claim to preserve those precious moments. Yet, rather than recording them, it constructs these moments as such, reminding those doubting the reality of familial bliss that the proof is there; they are successfully enacting the 'happy family' worthy of visual record.

The dialectic of forgetting and remembering was not only explicit in the women's narratives, but implicitly referred to. Lillian's narrative about her changing relationship with feminism and politics (p.104) implied a necessary forgetting to reconcile her changed circumstances (such as getting married, having children and the diminished role of her career

in her life) with her feminist past. In this context the role of forgetting for women is a specifically gendered one. The radical alterations made across women's lives between operation in the public and private sphere require a particular form of forgetting which lubricates the transition from a largely public agent to one operating largely in the private domain.

Forgetting is also necessary to deal with particularly gendered trauma. A feature of several interviews was the issue of miscarriage or infant death.

> **Interviewer**: *Do you visit those memories of Victoria often?*
> **Francesca**: *Very rarely. It's not necessary at all. When I say don't burst into tears, because it would be wasted. It was very sad. But I don't have any regrets about it. It was a very steep learning curve. It was a very valuable experience. I was devastated at the time but I went on to have two happy healthy children. It would be much more tragic if I hadn't. When you have two healthy children you don't have time to consider one that dies. It was a very important experience in my life. The only times I would possibly think about them now, if I think how old Georgina is, it occasionally pops into my head. Or if I knew someone who was going through a similar experience I would, I hope, be brave enough to share it if they needed to talk to somebody about. But I don't need to do it myself.*

> **Susan**: *So we got married and he's a building surveyor, an architect. We got a house to rent, fortunately, which was very lucky in 1953. We stripped it with the help of a Scout group...very handy. Lived there for two or three years. Bought piece of land which in those days you could. Built a house practically ourselves in Loughborough. Lived in that for a couple of years. I lost a baby at that time. Gave up work but went back doing drawing work for Alan and also did some teaching at [place name] for crafts at the boys school and then we bought a piece of ground on the main road at Sileby. We built a bungalow there, which was very contemporary for its time. The fifties, it was quite, it was nicest one I think, I loved it because it was so contemporary. It's not now, it's been knocked around it looks completely different...*

Francesca explicitly talks about not needing to actively remember the child she lost. It appears that, in order to move on with her life, it is necessary to limit the presence of her daughter in the present. Susan talks less explicitly but her insertion of her child's death into an otherwise benign narrative of geographical location illustrates that she has inserted the event into a narrative, not of grief but of forward movement towards her current temporal-spatial location, entailing a degree of 'forgetting' of the emotional trauma of the event. This is not to say the emotions are irretrievable but rather deliberately not voiced. A clue as to the extent of the emotional anguish that she does not give voice to is evident in the assertion in the following sentence that she gave up work. These two examples concur with Hannoum's (2000) reading of Ricoeur that 'forgetfulness, and hence also forgiveness, are a necessity for memory, not

always the enemy' (p.130) in that strategic forgetting is necessary both self- and sub-consciously to be able to maintain a narrative coherence in terms of a sense of self and experience as it is communicated to others.

This is not to say that forgetting always takes place in response to traumatic experiences. Remembering and forgetting can exist in tension with one another. Some of the participants displayed an excess of memory in these circumstances despite a conscious desire to forget. Sarah's intricately detailed narration of her mugging is a clear example:

> **Sarah**: *I've been gabbling on about nice memories I do actually make myself think about that because its quite important to remember bad things as well sometimes and that was something that happened about eight years ago maybe. It was just something that happened in the middle of the afternoon, I was walking along on my own in Leicester and I was working, I was actually delivering leaflets, quite an exciting job as you can imagine. Umm and this young man just came up and asked me the time and I gave him the time and then he held a knife to my stomach and said 'don't say anything, don't scream, follow me' and made me go with him and sort of took me. It was broad daylight, I mean there were people around. I was carrying, it's quite an entertaining memory now, but I had sort of this old trolley with wheels, y'know like an old granny trolley with all these leaflets in which is what we used and I has these stupid big thick platform sandals on that you couldn't really run in, so I was kind of, y'know...in your head you're thinking how could I get away from this situation. I was petrified cos...I didn't know what this guy was going to do, and how stable he was. And he took me through the back of this school and there were kids everywhere and you know ... I wanted to say something but I couldn't and he started leading me up these back streets in Leicester and I was panicking and y'know in your head you're thinking all these horrendous images of being in some horrible run-down house or all these things. I just kept talking to him all the time and saying 'what are you doing with me, where are you taking me' and through his answers it kind of emerged that, I was kind of thinking 'I don't think you really know what you want with me' and I said if you want money I can give you some money and he said 'no, no I'm going to take you somewhere secret' and all of this and umm, and later on as we were walking up a road he said 'actually I will, I do want money, give me your money' and I said 'I haven't got any money on me y'know, I'm going to have to go to the cash point' (laugh) which was absolutely true umm, so we kind of turned a right and then another right and I sort of said 'the cash point's down here' and it became really surreal cos we were walking down this road and I had this stupid trolley and I was saying so 'y'know, do you do this kind of thing often to people' and he was saying 'oh, only when I need the money' and I was sort of thinking oh, 'but you didn't need the money before so you're actually just a liar' and we got to the cash point and I said don't look over my shoulder, I don't want you to see my pin number and he did what I said, and I though 'oh, you're a prat' and I said 'how much money do you want?' and he said 'twenty quid' and I said 'is that all you want, you've made me do all this for twenty quid' and he went 'no, no, thirty, thirty' and I thought 'oh get*

> *lost' and so I got the money out and he said 'don't give it me here, give it to me round the corner' and so we went round the corner and I said 'look if I give you this I don't ever want to see you again'. I gave it to him and he kind of went off. And I went into the bank and queued up for a bit and then thought 'ooh, and told her I'd been mugged at knifepoint' and that was it really but y'know the police came and it kind of went on though cos then they got him and we had to go and do an identity parade and it was quite traumatic the whole experience umm...it kind of pops into my head I suppose y'know...it was the moment, the knife at the stomach moment that you know, immediately pops into your head. You can't really help but think about.*

Sarah expresses both a desire to forget and a desire to remember this event, casting her painful affective response and her desire to overcome her disbelief in tension. The incredible detail of the narrative shows considerable internal coherence but the integration of this episode into the broader narrative of her experience is limited. Explanatory devices that would enable the episode's assimilation within a broader framework of meaning are not wholly successful, allowing the memory to retain its painful attributes and its power to disrupt narrative coherence.

This inability to forget and the resulting autonomy and unpredictability of traumatic memories is also alluded to by Mukta.

> **Mukta**: *There are times when you want to remember, you want to keep them [memories] with you and there are times when you want to forget about them. Like I said there are a few years of my life when I came here at the beginning, we were trying to work hard and settle down on the other hand there is something poking you behind. It won't let you go any further. Those years were the worst years of my life. But that's all gone now...Good things are to treasure and those things that have hurt you are...umm, not any important thing to remember. I'd rather forget them. There are certain things you try and forget but sometimes all of a sudden it comes into your mind and pinches you and says 'I'm still here'. But that's life.*

The idea that bad memories 'poke' and 'pinch' her signals their potent ability to wound her in the present. The use of imagined direct speech of the memory in her narration emphasises the independence and autonomy she perceives them to have. Forgetting in this instance is often desirable but not always possible and is contingent on the context in which remembering is being enacted. The very resistance of traumatic memories to assimilation may be the source of their unwanted remembrance. The atypicality of a particular event means that it cannot blend into a narrative of experience or self, resulting in a perpetual visibility. For example, Francesca performs narrative work in rationalising the death of her first child by assimilating it into a narrative of subsequent successful motherhood. This makes sense of the event but

simultaneously emphasises its irrelevance to the present, thereby legitimating forgetting. Where a traumatic event is not made sense of in this way, it is difficult to forget as any claims to its relevance in the present cannot be refuted by referring to its position in a wider self-oriented or experiential framework of meaning.

Technologies of memory can aid deliberate attempts to forget in the pursuit of coherent narratives of self or experience. Photography seems particularly suited to this purpose. The material nature of the personal photographic image lends itself to circulation and destruction in ways not immediately apparent with musical texts, partly resulting from music's existence in the public domain. Sonia talks extensively about her use of photographs to aid the forgetting of her first marriage, not only in terms of the relationship, but of her sense of self during that time.

> **Sonia**: *I don't have a lot of photographs. I don't keep a lot. My mum keeps a lot um, I'm just...recently thrown a load away, from a period in my life when I was married and, cos I'm moving on to a new chapter, um, and I've got some from when I was small. But there's a bit of a gap in the middle, and I've got some recent ones from the past few years.*
> **Interviewer**: *How did it feel throwing those photographs away?*
> **Sonia**: *It felt quite cleansing actually. Um yeah, quite...I wasn't sad at all, it was like this is a new chapter in my life and I'm just going to get on with it and it was quite happy actually... I've thrown a lot of pictures out from my marriage period of time. I've still got pictures from being with friends during that time and um, I've some dogs and I've still got my dogs, my mum's side of the family rather than my husband's and things like that. But I have edited a bit of my life, which uh, yeah. To say it was a mistake is probably a bit harsh but (pause) at the moment it's still quite fresh, only a few years ago and...its like, not trying to forget it ever happened but, just like hide it away for a while or whatever. Focus on other things. (Pause) I sometimes think, 'what were you thinking?', cos when I had my re-evaluation, it's like my ex wasn't for me. We wanted different things. We were totally opposite and I thought 'what were you thinking' and that's the only way I can probably describe that period of my life.*
> **Interviewer**: *So what is remembering that period like?*
> **Sonia**: *It's like I'm having an out-of-body experience and they happened to somebody else, whereas my memories from childhood and up to that first marriage are all mine and they're quite vivid and I can recall lots of things and then beyond that (pause) but that period it's like not, that wasn't really me, it's happening to somebody else.*

Sonia actively ring-fences the period of her first marriage using photographic images, purging them from her collection. She sets up a continuity in her photograph collection that misses out the section of her life characterised by her first marriage. The removal of these photographs does not constitute the total refusal of remembering but actively diminishes the centrality of that period of time in an account of her life constructed in the photo album, robbing it of its

defining power. Forgetting for Sonia does not involve a complete erasure of the experience of her first marriage but rather an omission of her own experience of agency within it, characterised by her account of the 'out-of-body experience'. She effectively uses images to externalise the experience and dislocate it from a continuous sense of self that runs from her childhood into the present.

Forgetting is not something that occurs in the interaction of social and individual memory. Forgetting also exists at the intersection of private and public remembering. Iris talks painfully about her experiences of remembering and forgetting involved in her husband's mental illness and subsequent death.

> **Iris:** *Well, I've only been here two years. I left the house at Buckingham Drive and vowed never to go back. I had to leave him in the end. And it was just like y'know* Great Expectations, *and nothing had changed. And when he died, I had to go up to the house, nothing had changed. There were no cleaning or anything done. Nothing!. Nothing, it were just, nothing had changed. I said to my girls, 'I'm never going back up that house'. There's too many bad memories. By God there were. I said 'I'm never going back up'. But when he died I had to go up. Clear it out. I never ask help, but I said 'I've got to have help this time. I can't do it'. Oh it was awful. It brought it all back. I wish the bugger would go, but it won't. Nothing had changed. It was if I'd just gone, that day. It were absolutely filthy. So where was social services and all his care workers?*
> **Interviewer:** *Do you remember those things often?*
> **Iris:** *Sometimes they come. Our girl, she brought her dad's television. I said 'I don't want it in the house. I'm sorry but I don't want it'. She said 'oh' she says 'mam'. I says 'no! I don't want it!'. In't it strange, I never thought I'd do that. I said 'no, I don't want it'. The worst part of it was, cos he had a heart attack, so they found him, so I had to go to the, they all knew where I lived, I left everything, his carers knew where I lived, I still went in to look after him. And I get this call, 'could I go to the police station', I said 'what on earth for', they said 'concerning your husband' so I said 'I bet he's not taking his medication' which he didn't, so he says 'it's a bit more serious than that' so I says 'oh, like what' and he 'says oh, we'll send the police down'. Well, I were on me own in a little flat, you can imagine. Then they told me and they said 'well can you get?' and I says 'no, I can't', I said 'well I've got to tell our girls'. Cos I tried to keep everything from 'em. And I suppose, as our Ruth said 'mum, we knew everything what were going off'. But you try to shield em from...this and then, then I had to go to um, county courts to get his possessions. I were all at sixes and sevens, I'd got to do this, I said 'I can't write that'. Buggers wouldn't help me. I've never forgotten that. I said you'll have to help me...how to spell it cos I got... so it's all spelt dreadful and I've never forgotten that. And all there was, was his driving licence, hundred and something pound, that were it. Oh it were awful. To go in that house. It were like* Great Expectations. *Nothing had changed. Not chucked anything away.*

Iris draws on the literary motif of Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* in order to make sense of her husband's inability to move away from the past. In using this device she is able to use culturally existing frameworks of knowledge to make intelligible her husband's behaviour and her reaction to it. Firstly, like Miss Havisham, the excess of memory and the inability to move on is constructed as abnormal or deviant, resulting from a trauma: in her husband's case, schizophrenia and for Miss Havisham, the shock of being jilted. Her affective response is then also drawn into this narrative framework, justifying the fear and disorientation it elicits. The Dickens motif emphasises the culturally and socially entrenched knowledge of the role of the past in the present and the dangers it can pose to the successful enactment of everyday life. Cultural knowledge intersects with personal experiences, providing systems of understanding and normative standards through and against which otherwise unintelligible experiences can be made sense of.

Beyond the narrative construction of this extract, Iris's poignantly stark contrast between an excess of memory and a need to forget illustrates the intense pain that can be caused by temporal disorientation. The fundamental belief in progress, described in Iris's account as change, is compromised when socially constructed temporal orders are transgressed in her physical return to a particularly painful scene from her past. Where memory's inevitable quality of pastness prevents the destabilising of boundaries between past and present, Iris experiences the almost literal return of the past in the material environment of her husband's house. The distinction between past and present collapses, throwing into question her identity in the present, developed over the time since leaving her husband. The confusion and disorientation of this compulsion to remember is epitomised in the almost mantra-like repetition of 'nothing had changed', as not only had the material environment remained the same, it also resituated Iris herself into the context of her past, demanding that she stayed the same.

The inability to forget the particular trauma of being denied help with writing at the county court has to be understood within Iris's existing framework of understanding of her own social position. Her constant re-iteration of her own social marginality, of being a back-row person and 'not educated', results in the stark feelings of failure and transgression she experiences at the county court. These resonate coherently with her existing sense of self and as such are directly relevant to the present. This semantic coherence between past and present contributes to why this episode is so well remembered and its enduring potency over time.

Forgetting, like remembering, is contingent on the context of its enactment and cannot always be straightforwardly performed. The norms of remembering and forgetting are

well established in cultural life and act as benchmarks and explanatory devices for our everyday mnemonic activity. Forgetting is never just erasure but a complex negotiation of knowledge of past and present in the interests of constructing a coherent sense of self. This work is never complete and, as evidenced by Iris's account, always struggled over.

Chapter 10
Conclusion: Shifting Perceptions of Time.

The analytical trajectory of this study has moved from a theoretical consideration of the temporal possibilities of modernity and remembering as a source of historical engagement, to the ways in which this is enacted in the variety of mnemonic activity in women's daily lives. Previously, a conceptual distance between individual, social and cultural forms of memory has been maintained, or the relations between them have been simplistically conceived. In this study, private remembering and memory in its public forms in the participants' everyday remembering have been understood as mutually constitutive and in constant negotiation. Similarly, in the assessment of remembering, the movement from the theoretical consideration of relationships to time and the conceptual tools we have available to us in the first half of the thesis, to the empirical assessment of the ways in which women remember in everyday life in the second, may appear linear, but the continual cross-fertilization between the theoretical and the empirical has made their conclusions interdependent, retaining an in-and-between, rather than a from-to, relationship between the two dimensions. It is in this concluding chapter that the reconciliation of the theory and experience of both public and private remembering must be completed.

Like the experiences of the participants, whose mnemonic labour served to mediate between public and private senses of self and time, the distinction between public and private memory has constantly been interwoven throughout the course of the study. Consideration of the ways that it is possible to think about the past and the practical and imaginative tools we have for doing so, in the chapters on nostalgia, media of memory, and mnemonic imagination, all feature this distinction. Nostalgia and mnemonic imagination are considered as modes of making sense of the past and in their enactments must oscillate between public accounts of time and the past and private ways of generating a sense of temporal identity and agency. Photography and phonography are considered as technologies that enable us to make these transitions and connections, enabling meaning to be generated across time and space. The dynamics of memory deals with this distinction more closely and seeks an identification and rapprochement of these two modes in preparation for an assessment of the ways they are enacted in everyday life. The chapter on gender and memory identifies the ways that social and personal experiences of gender are mutually constitutive, mediated by memory in the interests of creating a temporalised sense of self which is at once unique and communally identifiable. The role of mnemonic technologies of memory in achieving this and also limiting it, is assessed in the following chapter, which details the possibilities that late modern

technologies of memory provide for us in the project of imaginatively and socially managing the past in its multiple forms. The navigation of public and private time is again brought into sharp focus with a consideration of the explicit ways in which this relationship is enacted by the participants in the chapter Reconnecting Public and Private Memory. What remains elusive at this point, is an holistic temporal framework into which these twin modes of engagement with the past fit. How are their constant actions expressed in our overall sense of time?

This is why a consideration of the participants' shifting perceptions of time forms a fitting conclusion to this study. Perceptions of time are the holistic temporal orientation under which remembering is conducted, and are experienced in relation to the notion of historical time. The temporal possibilities of late modernity that were addressed in the very first chapter on nostalgia, and have been thematically present throughout the study, resound in the participants' plural and changeable orientations to time and history. A governing sense of time, responsive to contemporary temporal conditions and to an individual's circumstances, guides and directs mnemonic activity to the demands of the present. A consideration of these contingent ways of perceiving time and the framework of reference they provide from the activities of remembering brings together and binds the two key twinned dimensions of this study: theoretical potentialities and phenomenological experience of time, and public and private time and memory.

If we are to come full circle and fully reconcile these concerns, the voices of the participants must remain audible. A central aim of this study has been to recognise that temporal frameworks of late modernity are variously inhabited and orientations to them take different forms. These cannot be recognised and assessed without reference to women's lived experience. To both remain true to the objective of centralising women's experience of time, and to address remembering in the fullest and most sensitive possible way, we must hear the echoes of time in the women's narratives, rather than abstracting them from their lived contexts.

The participants' particular ways of relating to the past and their constructions of a contingent and durable sense of self led to an identification of differing perceptions of time and temporality. Not only did this vary between participants, but the same participants also discussed time in different ways. Broad shifts in ideas and perceptions of temporality were seen in movement through the life course though these were by no means used exclusively. Rather different modes of thinking about the past coexisted and could be variously drawn on.

These temporal orientations provided meta-structures within and through which the women were able to formulate and experiment with the narratives of their past.

Many of the younger women's narratives constructed time in a linear way. The narrative set up a sense of time based around their own family, emphasising family traits or skills and their own position in relation to them. Fundamentally they were narratives of becoming, characterised by a forward-moving trajectory of self-development. Their sense of time was oriented to their progression into coherent adult selves bearing familial hallmarks or characteristics, locating them in the bounded and secure family unit. The narratives were characterised by their continuous self-conscious attention to constructing a sense of self, the idea of progression and the concept of an endpoint to this process.

> **Rani**: *Like everything I did I always put a lot of my passion into it whether it was school work reading, or dance. But I was brilliant at dance because that was what I was really good at. And when I was younger I always dreamt of myself as an actress. I always used to say to my sister I'm going to be an actress, I'm going to be a dancer and I'm going to be on stage, because things like that I'm very passionate about, but obviously over the years (pause) it's not the kind of career you are taken, I think if I was focussed more and I had the right support and guidance I probably would have got there... I feel a bit sort of suppressed because of that. That's how it makes me feel. It makes me feel like oh I wonder if I will ever do anything with my music or my talent, or with dancing, will I do anything? And part of me just can see a closed door. I can see myself looking forward to dancing and singing in terms of a hobby, but in terms of a career? I still think there's space, I still think there's space. I wouldn't like to think that there's not space at all. I think there is still plenty of time, space and opportunity for me to do that.*

These senses of time place the past, present and future in close relation to one another, foregrounding causal relations between them. The future is constructed as an arena of potential where past experiences will come to fruition.

This form of narrative was arbitrarily adopted, but was commonly employed by the younger women who were either single or in a heterosexual partnership but located themselves in the context of a parental nuclear family, rather than having children of their own. There was an interesting shift in the narratives of older women who followed this life pattern and have not sought to establish a nuclear family:

> **Sonia**: *You've got to look on it that you are a different person now, however the person you were before wasn't necessarily a bad thing or anything, it's just a....I suppose it's like a butterfly coming out and there's different stages of development in your life isn't there. And I look*

back and there are some things I think 'god, I shouldn't have done that' or 'why have I done that' or 'I would have done that differently' or I would have made different choices. And then there are other things I look back on and it makes me smile cos I think that was a good time or that was a good time or that was a happy time and the person I am today wouldn't have enjoyed that.

Jenny: *I often say to my friends I feel like I'm in my third life now. You have different lives y'know. Things change so much and I look at the person I used to be and it's nothing like I am now and it's almost like a film I'm watching. I find it hard to relate to. So I can't really remember that much about how I felt when I was a child other than feeling quite feeling quite heavily responsible for everything all the time.*
Interviewer: *Can you describe how it feels to not be able to identify with yourself in those previous lives?*
Jenny: *Yeah. Odd. Umm, cos I think its something that perhaps I've actually done on purpose (pause). That I've actually (pause)...I can sort of pinpoint times when I've thought 'right, things are going to change. I'm going to make things different'. It's almost like a conscious decision that I'm going to be different now. Which is quite strange. So I'm kind of comfortable with that I suppose. I don't know if it's reinventing yourself, I don't know. Uh, I like myself more now than I did then I suppose. I suppose that's what it's meant to be really.*

Similarly to the younger women, thinking about the past and giving an account of their lives is intimately bound up with deliberately communicating and constructing a sense of self. What is different is that these narratives are no longer perceived to be continuous through time. Breaks and ruptures characterise these women's perceptions of time and its experience, when old understandings of the world are no longer viable, and structures of feeling and new sense-making structures have to be generated and drawn on. The continuity characteristic of the youngest women's perceptions of past, present and future becomes, in time, unsustainable and new formulations of time have to be imagined in order to retain a sense of future potential that is not irreparably damaged by the fragmentation of a life narrative. The characterisation of life narratives as necessarily involving these ruptures is made viable through the employment of existing frameworks of understanding change such as the metaphors of the developing butterfly or the pseudo-religious concepts of rebirth. These allow the women to make sense of what would otherwise be radical breaks in their sense of who they are and the life course they are following. They also emphasise their own agency in the narrative, assuming responsibility for the points at which the past is radically re-imagined and the ways in which this is undertaken. In doing so, Sonia and Jenny are able to assume responsibility for their future experience and therefore retain a sense of potential or progression despite radical shifts in their temporally inflected sense of self, rather than surrendering their experience to a fatalistic conception of the inexorable advancement of the present.

This explicit and self-conscious use of memory in constructing a sense of self is something that is seen to a much lesser degree in the participants who were in the process of raising children and were part of a nuclear family. Although no less radical changes occur in the lives of women with children, the systems for making sense of these changes are somewhat different. One of the central differences is a notion of cyclical time based around the reproduction of the nuclear family.

Lillian: *I think in terms of my mum, I think there are things there that I'd quite like to be wary of cos there are aspects of my personality that might lead me down that road if I'm not careful and I suppose remembering how my mum was and remembering the fact that she wasn't always that happy makes me think 'well actually I'm not going to do that'. In terms of the children, yeah I think, remembering almost serves to remind you, to remind you that actually they're not with you for that long. And when you first have a child you think that, that's it. Y'know this huge amount of time kind of spans in front of you and sometimes you think 'oh no what have I done' Laugh. But it goes incredibly fast. And people always say to you 'it goes really, really fast' and you think, 'oh yeah'. But when you get to like, you know, my daughter is now ten, going on eleven and she's at a y'know really interesting time, point of her development, she's just about to go to secondary school and so you know, that kinds of brings you back and so at the moment I'm kind of thinking, 'oh this is the last term at her primary school' and I think it just kind of makes you think. Yes and in another ten years she's not going to be living at home at all, and so the memory of her as she was, kind of makes you think I've got to try and remember her at every stage. Get the most out of each stage and if I don't...because there are parts that y'know I think, 'oh I can't remember being on my own at home at home with just one baby, I can't remember what it was like really' and I have to try and think 'what did we do everyday', cos I've never written a diary.*

Louise: *For me to have the chance to go university and have a career um seemed very important to them [parents] and they really, my mother in particular, really thought I was making a bad mistake, making the choices I did. I find myself now saying to my very career-minded journalist daughter, she's got a lovely boyfriend at the moment, she's very who she is very keen on and it's a very good relationship, he's looking to move um, they're both working together at the moment, he's looking to move and I'm saying 'oh go with him then' y'know 'it's so important, just go with him, you might not have a journalism job straight away um, but you could always temp and you'll pick up something later, but y'know don't let this relationship go, its too good, don't let it go' and I said to her 'Jenny, please ignore me' because what I I'm doing, I'm doing exactly what my mother did, y'know. 'I'm imposing my ideas about what's important in life on you in the same way my mother tried to with me'. She was projecting, if I had your opportunities and I'm projecting from my experiences that the most important is the relationship, don't let that go. You move where he goes. And I said 'just don't take any notice of me, I can see what I'm doing. You must make your own decisions because....'.*

Lillian identifies strongly with her own mother's role as a wife and mother and, despite discussing changes she would make to her mother's enactment of this role, her sense of self is oriented towards the assumption of a particular familial role, one that is replicated through the generations. Her reference to her children's 'stages' also reinforces the narrative formulation of cyclical time, suggesting that people pass through given stages and those following them will do the same. Louise also notes that, in a repeating pattern, she is performing the same roles and relationships as her mother before her. The narrative construction of cyclical time and the stable roles within it, allows both Lillian and Louise to make sense of their transitions from an independent, career-oriented way of life or education into her familial, domestic, private roles by viewing these shifts as movement between stages of life which exist independently of their personal agency.

However, the perceived validity of these temporal family structures can be compromised, throwing into question the possibility of time as cyclically structured. The breakdown of Rachel's parent's marriage and her own have made the self-replicating family structure one that is ill-equipped to make sense of her experience.

> **Rachel**: *As far as my dad's photographs are concerned, they're not my memories. I know it's perhaps a strange thing to say but they're not my memories... I personally have no interest in that. Cos after I've gone no-one else will particularly take an interest in it either. I don't see the point. I'm not into that sort of thing.*

Rather than a cyclical temporality, which she actively rejects, Rachel refers to an enduring sense of essential femininity which for her is more stable and endures through time (see Rachel on p.106 and p.160) which intersects with a high investment in a generational identity (see p.179). These two intersecting themes provide both Rachel with a sense of self which makes sense *in* time (generation) and *through* time (femininity).

The older participants experienced a broadened sense of time and of their own temporal context. Although continuing to be strongly oriented towards the family and its specific past, the perspective of each narrative became wider, encompassing issues which went some way to closing the gap between history and memory. One of the characteristics of this shift in narrative structure is a foregrounding of the importance of genealogical activity and knowledge.

> **Interviewer**: *What got you into family history?*
> **Susan**: *Well my husband retired. It's the sort of thing that we so at our age, when we start y'know getting into your seventies. When you retire*

> *your family history, you do all sorts of boring things that you didn't have time to do when the children were small. When we started it was all in the local, all by print, all looking through records which we found more intriguing than the internet. Much more interesting. You didn't only absorb your own, you found the neighbours and you found the street, and you found people's jobs in the street and my history was never very strong but I've learned so much history since and how things affected people's lives.*

Susan explicitly notes the absence of her children as a motivation to broaden her temporal perspective. She not only gathers historical information but does so through the prism of familial interest, bringing together socio-cultural historical conditions and shifts with a narrative of her family's progression, culminating in her own lived experience.

A range of abstract concepts also begin to feature heavily in personal relationships with the past which are used by the participants to situate themselves in a wider temporal context:

> **Grace:** *Although there were two classes then. And I'm a mixture of both. We were quite poor but my mother had a sister who lived with us who never worked, so when we were born in the town, the top of the road was quite rough and we were forbidden to go up there. Consequently my friends were shop owner's children and my brother's friend was the only son of a bespoke tailor whose premises are now that café in Station street next to the gent's outfitters.*

> **Eva:** *In the 1800s it was a regular thing for men to beat their wives. It was standard. So he [her grandfather] used to knock her [her grandmother] about. The third child I think died when he was about 18 months old and the doctor said he should be hung for murder because it's through him that the baby died, because he beat her so. She was determined after that, that she would never bear him another child and so she aborted herself seven times. Of course she was Catholic so she needed a special dispensation of the Pope to be separated. But um, she lived with the only man I know as my grandfather until her husband died, well he didn't die until well into the thirties. But they married at the beginning of the war. But that was only to please the, cos they were perfectly happy. I think they were happier the way they were. It was only to please the reverend. They were living in sin (laugh). Oh dear. I think that's why I couldn't... I was a Catholic I suppose, growing up, but I couldn't accept, couldn't accept anywhere where women are, (laugh) below the men in anything. Muslims or anything. Women should be equal as partners. I like being a Quaker. Its fine for old people; you don't have to stand; you don't have to sing; you don't have to kneel.*

> **Meera** (interpreter)*: She says the important thing about having these memories is to teach how to live life. The way we do things and the way we live, our experience, how to save money, just for the betterment of, so that each generation is better for the experiences of the previous generation.*

The older participants are making sense of their lives, not only with reference to lived experience in terms of future-oriented personal development, or cyclical family time, but in the context of broader historical shifts. This can be understood as at least partly in response to an increasing disparity between the socio-cultural context of the present and their own life experiences and, accordingly, their sense of self. Grace talks of the class divisions which were definitive in her construction of an identity which rests uneasily between professional and working-class experience. Despite a continued pervasiveness of class structures, class boundaries have become increasingly blurred, rendering irrelevant Grace's confusion over what she perceives to be her class identity. Only when situated in a broader history of the class system in Britain does her sense of concern about her class credentials begin to have resonance. Similarly, Eva's location of her own religious choices only make sense in relation to her talk about women's historical domestic subjugation. In order to communicate a sense of self coherently, the contexts which produced that self must be adhered to where the contemporary systems of making sense of the world would be inadequate. This not only refers to a broadening sense of past, but also that of the future. Lalan talks about the legacy of knowledge she will be leaving for future generations. In this sense, the women are situating their life narratives as part of a wider history.

The participants' sense of time shifts according to their particular position in relation to conventional temporal structures. Relationships with the past range from narratives of progression and development which emphasise individual agency, to the notion of time as a cycle, with stable roles and identities that can be assumed and progressed through. The merging of history and memory is not a move from memory to history. Mnemonic activity as a system of personally relating to both the abstract and experiential, public and private past remains central to these women's accounts. Drawing historical perspective into narratives of self, so closing the gap in communication between the past and present, is to recognise oneself and one's memories as part of historical time.

Chapter 11
Post Script: Memory in future

In dealing with the phenomenon of memory I hope to have demonstrated that it is necessary to have an eye on the present and future as well as on the past. In drawing the thesis to a close it is useful to pause and consider the achievements and the limitations of the thesis in terms of what it tells us about memory in everyday life, its contributions to the present field of memory studies, and look to the future of this field as a whole.

This study of memory has achieved several things. In this first instance it has successfully engaged with and sharpened several taken for granted approaches to the study of memory. The critical examination of photography and phonography as technologies of memory has developed an understanding of them which neither unconditionally celebrates their temporal status as mechanical recording devices, nor assumes that their reproducibility leads to an inevitable loss of historicity. This more sensitive assessment more closely matches the ways in which photography and phonography are used in the enactments of memory in everyday life. The revision of nostalgia as a critical concept has also contributed to a more sensitive account of vernacular relationships between past and present. Rather than viewing nostalgia as a dystopian dead end, it can be recognised as a pluralised mode of engaging with the past which has the potential to both foster and attenuate historicity. Bringing imagination and memory into view of one another in the conceptualisation of the mnemonic imagination has been a key achievement in the thesis. By refusing to accept the severe separation of tenses that these two faculties involve, the past and engagement with it can be considered as a holistic experience which speaks to the past, present and future. Bringing imagination to bear on memory provides a fuller explanation of the ways in which the past can be actualised as a creative resource in the interests of the present rather than solely as a retreat from it.

Throughout the thesis, the relationship between private and public time and personal and collective remembering has been addressed. It has been most specifically considered in chapters five and nine. In doing so, the thesis has contributed to a rapprochement of these two domains of memory and has recognised their mutual interactions in the ways in which they are experienced. This has been achieved by the twin focus of the thesis: the development of conceptual tools for interrogating everyday memory, and attendance to the experiences of those who perform memory in their everyday lives. Incorporating social variables such as gender, ethnicity and age, enabled the collective and communal dimensions of memory to be

read, whilst a focus on their unique intersections in any given participant enabled the specificity and intensity of memory in constructing the self to be respected.

Using the voices of women achieved both political and epistemological aims. In political terms the marginalised voices of women were made audible through the work. Those women who have been limited in the space and time afforded to them to tell their stories and to put their experience forward into the public domain have been given that opportunity through participation in this study. Epistemologically, the study was able to counter positivistic notions of historical evidence, truth and validity and contest traditional hierarchies of evidence by following a cultural studies tradition of positioning everyday experience as a source of knowledge. In doing so, women's everyday experiences of memory were recognised not only as plural and diverse, but more importantly as bearing the hallmarks of temporal engagement and historical awareness so frequently thought to be on the wane in contemporary society.

The study did of course have its limitations. The nature of doctoral research has meant that the scale of the study is more modest than I would have liked. A larger group of participants which encompassed a more diverse range of social positions would be desirable if the study was to be repeated or extended. Multiple encounters with the participants would also have been a productive way to develop the data collected. Relationships could be established and more depth and detail could be achieved over a longer period of time. Only using women participants was a deliberate choice and one which I do not regret as I continue to advocate women's experience being considered on its own terms rather than measured against a male benchmark. This has meant that the study only speaks to the experience of women and in further studies this could be extended to incorporate male participants in order to speak to lived experience at a more general level.

In conducting the fieldwork difficulties arose that could be remedied in further study. A professional interpreter would have facilitated the discussions with the older women for whom English was not their first language and would have enabled communication to be achieved in the interviews more clearly and effectively. Multiple meetings with these women would have been of particular value as in some cases it was difficult to build a relationship of trust where communication was difficult. In general, several of the older women were intensely eager to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear and tended to be self-deprecating about the value of their experiences. Establishing a more developed relationship could also help in building the confidence of the participant in order they are able to participate fully in the research.

A further limitation that must be noted is the exclusive focus on two particular technologies of memory, both in the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the study. Although these selections were necessary in order to maintain a manageable and coherent study and were justifiable choices, a broadened focus to consider other everyday technologies such as home video equipment, would provide a more comprehensive account of the ways in which everyday remembering is conducted. The study would also benefit from a more comprehensive theoretical investigation of the public cultural constructions of the past and the conventions of representation on which they draw. This could then be explored through the fieldwork in terms of audience's uses of these media texts.

The thesis contributes to what can be identified as the emerging field of memory studies. In line with the popular boom in memory and its textual representation, academic considerations of memory are on the rise. The field itself is at this point characterised by its interdisciplinary nature, including contributions from psychology, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies and history. This interdiscplinarity is theoretically exciting and intensely engaging but is fraught with difficulty. Emerging in the field are several divisions. The separation of the empirical and the theoretical is a particularly problematic cleavage. For example the work of Andrew Hoskins on 'new memory' and the work of Huyssen on contemporary experiences of time, insightful and productive as they are, speak little to the ways in which memory is lived on a day-to-day basis. Likewise, investigations of lived memory often seem disengaged from the wider project of developing conceptual tools for investigating memory in modernity and focus exclusively on the minutiae of particular forms of instances of memory (see for example Kuhn, 2002b). It is at the nexus of these two modes of investigation that I situate this study and position it as an intervention in the field designed to move towards bridging this divide. The grand overviews of late modern temporal engagement must be considered in relation to the way memory is lived if we are to develop a holistic understanding of the potential for historicity and transformation under current socio-cultural conditions.

The thesis occupies a second liminal position. The field of memory studies has tended to separate out into those who consider public time and memory, which ranges from the study of sites of memory (i.e. Nora, 1996) to the mediated representations of the past on television (i.e. Hoskins, 2004), and those who consider memory in its private incarnations (i.e. Walkerdine, 1991). This study seeks to occupy both spaces and consider their interrelations. With increasing numbers of cultural studies of memory being undertaken, this position is becoming increasingly adopted. For example Annette Kuhn's study of 1930s cinema going

shares the impetus to consider the ways social position and cultural conditions shape personal memory and the ways in which these memories feed into public accounts of the past. In reconciling public and private dimensions of the remembering, the closer we are able to get to understanding the totality of memories operation in the present.

In conclusion is important to provide some sort of signpost for the direction of memory studies. The strong epistemological influences from media and cultural studies have meant that there is an increasing consensus over the nature of memory as provisional and contingent but replete with the possibilities for transformative relationships to be fostered between past, present and future. The traditional value-laden hierarchies of historical evidence are no longer being brought to bear on memory and historical truth itself is being revised to account for its continual change and contingency on the present. Should this influence endure, the nature of the past as it circulates in the mediated landscape of contemporary cultural life will be reconciled with the uses to which it is put by groups and individuals in vernacular settings. The power to define the past is being reassessed and redistributed with normal people no longer considered the victim of top-down imposed histories (i.e. see Hobsbawn and Ranger) but active in their definition of it. I anticipate an increasing reconsideration of existing divisions between public and private memory, and a more sensitive treatment of the tension and reciprocity between them. Theoretical and empirical work will be increasingly brought to bear on one another in order to work towards an account of memory in late modernity which encompasses both its potential for engagement and disengagement with historicity, but also the myriad of ways in which these potentials are realised in the daily enactments and performances of memory in contemporary life.

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